LEARNING
Schools catch the literacy bug

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Convent, 5th church firebombed in Malaysia

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Disgraced wife of N. Ireland leader to resign

SPORTS / A27
Pacquiao-Clottey fight on as Roach rejects Mayweather compromise

GMA can appoint Puno replacement, say allies

By Christian V. Esguerra, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Philip C. Tubeza

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO CAN appoint the replacement for outgoing Chief Justice Reynato Puno during the final weeks of her nine-year administration, Malacañang allies said yesterday.

Their position runs counter to the stand

GMA CAN, A2

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INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, January 11, 2010 ★★ 10 sections / Vol. 33 / No. 34 P18

'Colla' is Coke's new competitor

LA PAZ, BOLIVIA—President Evo Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous leader known for chewing coca leaves at UN meetings, is making a fresh push for the plant, this time in the

COLLA, A17

DUQUE: Lighter challenge!

CABRAL: Continuing programs

Duque gets CSC post; Cabral to DOH

By Christian V. Esguerra, Dona Pazzibugan and Nikko Dizon

THE SEARCH FOR THE REplacement of Ricardo Saludo as chair of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) is over.

President Macapagal-Arroyo found the successor in her own Cabinet, moving Health Secretary Francisco Duque III to the CSC in her latest Cabinet reshuffle, triggered primarily by the coming elections.

Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral, a cardiologist, will take over the post to be vacated by Duque, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita yesterday announced in a text message to reporters.

"(The President) has appointed Secretary Cabral as the new health secretary. Duque is moving to the CSC," Ermita said.

The executive secretary added that Cabral would be replaced by Social Welfare Undersecretary Celia Yangco.

Agnes Devanadera is now the secretary of justice, Ermita also announced.

Devanadera assumed the post in an acting capacity after then Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez was named chief presidential legal counsel in June 2009. She is said to be gunning for a congressional seat in Quezon province.

The new appointments ended weeks of speculation that Duque would be transferred to the CSC following the final rejection of Saludo by the Commission on Appointments.

Saludo reportedly failed to meet the minimum require-

DUQUE, A4

Noy hits back at Manny

Election gun ban starts; 3 cops, 15 others held

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THIRTY MINUTES AFTER MIDNIGHT struck yesterday, a police officer in civilian clothes came down the road on a motorcycle with a .45-cal. Armscor pistol tucked in his waist.

PO1 Dennis Quinto of the Regional Mobile Group of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) never got past the police checkpoint in Quezon City.

He was the first violator of the nationwide election gun ban and one of a total of 18 people arrested in the first few hours of the ban, which took effect at 12:01 a.m. Sunday.

"We won't spare our own men in this campaign. So all those who plan to violate the [gun ban] must think twice," said Supt. Rommel Miranda, NCRPO spokesperson.

Among those arrested were two other policemen, a Navy enlisted personnel and a lawyer working in a government office.

Quinto failed to produce documents authorizing him to carry the weapon, said Chief Supt. Leonardo Espina, spokesperson of the Philippine National Police.

The Quezon City checkpoint where Quinto was intercepted was among the 1,500 mobile checkpoints manned by 90,000 policemen that were set up

ELECTION, A10

GUN CHECK. A policeman armed with an M-16 rifle guards a checkpoint set up in Isabela City in Basilan to implement the ban on the carrying of firearms during the election period.

SWS slip warning sign for Noynoy to shape up

By Amando Doronila

FOUR MONTHS BEFORE THE MAY elections, and five months after Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III announced his candidacy for president, a recent survey shows that support for Aquino, the front-runner, is declining, while that for his closest rival, Sen. Manuel Villar, is slowly rising.

ANALYSIS

According to the latest survey of Social Weather Stations (SWS) last Dec. 27-30, the race no longer appears to be two lopsided in favor of Aquino.

It is developing into a more competitive, and therefore exciting, electoral battle in which Aquino cannot remain complacent resting on the Edsa I legacy of his mother, President Corazon Aquino.

The survey shows that the Cory magic is wearing thin as an electoral asset.

The latest poll is a salvo across the bow warning Aquino to shape up with his campaign. Villar's stubborn catch-up is not yet threatening to enable him

SWS SLIP, A4

'Aren't you supposed to lead by example?'

By Philip C. Tubeza

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN push came to shove?

Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III yesterday came out swinging against Sen. Manuel "Manny" Villar for questioning his capacity to implement reforms, saying that Villar did not take the lead in questioning Arroyo administration scandals.

"When push came to shove, where were you? What have you done? He says he is not a person who easily picks a fight, but when you see the abuses in the system, does it not make you want to stand up and say enough is enough?" Aquino said in an interview.

"Aren't you supposed to lead by example and not just leave it to your colleagues?" Aquino said yesterday, speaking in English and Filipino.

Aquino was responding to the questions Villar raised at a presidential debate on Saturday, where the Nacionalista Party (NP) standard-bearer questioned Aquino's ability to implement real reforms.

Sen. Richard Gordon, who is also running for president in the May elections and is banking on his record of achievements as mayor of Olongapo

NOY HITS BACK, A6

PRO-AMPATUAN?

Probe of Smartmatic coordinator pushed

THE POLITICALLY POWERFUL Ampatuans may be in jail but their ability to control elections in Central Mindanao remains, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said yesterday.

In a statement, Pimentel warned that the integrity of the country's first automated polls in May was "in grave danger of being compromised" by people associated with the clan blamed for the election-related massacre of 57 people in Maguindanao on Nov. 23.

"Reports had reached my attention that Smartmatic, the company tasked with providing and operating the machines to be used in the automated polls, had hired political operators with known connections to the Ampatuan clan," he said.

"If this is true, then we might as well throw in the dogs this electoral exercise even before it is undertaken," Pimentel said, adding that the Commission on Elections (Comelec) should immediately look into the matter.

In a text message to the Inquirer, Smartmatic spokesperson Gene Gregorio said: "We will address the issue straightaway to allay fears and to remove suspicion."

Pimentel said the reports

PROBE, A12

EASY IN THE EARS. A man cleans a huge fiberglass statue of a boxer outside a shop in Manila. The dog statue, which stands about 6 and 1/2 feet, is being sold for P14,000. AP

Why light worsens migraine

PARIS—A DISCOVERY AMONG blind people has helped scientists resolve a mystery why light can make a migraine go from headache to head-splitter, according to a study published on Sunday.

The problem appears to lie with a newly discovered bunch of cells in the retina, according to the study's authors.

Researchers from Beth Israel Deaconess Center, an affiliate of Harvard Medical School, made the find after pondering why some blind people who suffer from migraines also experience photophobia—an extreme sensitivity to light that horribly

WHY LIGHT, A12

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Cardinal raps 'excessive show of faith' for Nazarene

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

MANILA ARCHBISHOP Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales frowned on the "excessive" display of faith exhibited by devotees of the Black Nazarene who turn the annual procession in honor of the image into an unwieldy mass of humanity.

Rosales said real devotion to the Black Nazarene called for leading a life of simplicity and selflessness.

At least two people died and about 600 were injured in this year's festivity on Saturday in which as many as four million people were estimated by police to have participated in the procession from Quirino Grandstand in Luneta to Quiapo Church in Manila.

Barefoot devotees, usually male, jostled each other to get on or near the carriage carrying the centuries-old image of a dark-skinned Jesus Christ to use their handkerchiefs to mop the sweat on the statue's face.

The image, sculptured in Mexico and darkened as a fire, is used by believers in the procession. They strive to kiss or wipe their handkerchiefs and towels on the image.

"Scenes of wilder excesses are an excessive expression of faith. There are many irreparable sins that need cleansing," said Rosales on Saturday night after the 15-hour procession.

He said lasting an many people get hurt can also contrary to the purpose of celebrating the holiness of the feast day and promoting true devotion.

Earlier, during the morning Mass at the Quirino Grandstand before the start of the procession, Rosales told the faithful that being a devotee of the Black Nazarene meant one should love one's neighbor by humility and charity.

"Plan to the real devotion," he said.

Rosales said that devotees should learn that the image of the Black Nazarene was a symbol of sacrifice and repentance.

Rosales spoke way of showing excess of faith is when you do it only for yourself, which should not be," he said.

House-to-house search set for private armies

By Marlon Ramos

ISABELA CITY, BASILAN—IN WHAT COULD BE their boldest move yet, state forces yesterday announced that they would conduct house-to-house searches in areas where private armies are known to operate in Western Mindanao.

"We will have searches in houses of suspected members and leaders of 'partisan armed groups,'" said Maj. Gen. Ben Dolorfino, Western Mindanao Command chief, in a security briefing attended by local executives here.

He said the operation would target the residences of identified leaders and members of private armies.

"We have to do this because (private armies) are not always exhibited and do not have camps. They keep their firearms inside their homes," Dolorfino said.

Private armies have been used by political clans and dynasties to intimidate and harass people and influence voting in order to keep their grip on power, Datu Zamzamin of the Tuburan Against Crime and Corruption (TACC), told the Inquirer in an earlier interview.

Zamzamin is a member of the ad-hoc multisectoral commission created by President Macapagal-Arroyo in December to dismantle private armies in the aftermath of the Nov. 23 massacre of 57 people in Maguindanao that has been blamed on the Ampatuan clan.

Mr. Arroyo has given the commission four months to complete its work or before the national elections in May.

Dolorfino said the raids would be launched by a joint task force of the PNP and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

To prevent human rights violations, he said the raids must be authorized by the Joint Security Control Center (JSCC) which would be headed by an election official with police and military officials as members.

Dolorfino said the raids would also be covered by court-issued search warrants.

The PNP and AFP, he said, would seek the assistance of the Department of Justice in obtaining warrants from the courts.

"This is the only way for us to go after private armies. That's why we are asking the help of the DOJ," he said.

According to Dolorfino, there are 91 armed groups in the nine provinces of Western Mindanao, 24 of them in Sulu.

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Now or never for Cha-cha, says solon

Lt. Union Rep Victor Ortega has seen Charter-change bills bypassed in five Congresses so he wants the current Congress to approve the bill once and for all.

In an interview, Ortega said majority of the House members were inclined on leaving Cha-cha up to the next Congress. As soon as the session resumes next Monday, they would want to table immediately a consolidated bill for the convening of a constitutional convention (Con-con) in October.

"It's now or never. If we postpone it for the next Congress, we will not be able to start the process of amending the Constitution which almost all of us has wished for years," said Ortega. Gil Cabacungan Jr.

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Duque gets CSC post; Cabral to DOH

From page A1

moves for the position, such as being a lawyer. But I later found out that he had turned down requests of certain lawmakers to appoint their protégés.

Still, Salido was given an ad interim appointment at the committee level, only to be rejected at the commission's plenary session.

Ms. Arroyo finally gave up on Salido in October last year and ordered a search for a new CSC chair.

Duque and Cabral never earlier announced to be considering close to the administration's senatorial slate. But they instead decided to stay in the Cabinet until Mr. Arroyo finished her nine-year term on June 30.

Duque welcomed his new post as CSC chair. When reached for comment, Duque appeared to have approved Malacañang's announcement.

He said he would assume his new office either tomorrow or Wednesday.

Consultations

Apparently having prepared himself for his new position, Duque said he had consulted with Salido and former CSC Chair Constancio Leus.

"It's my first time to be with the CSC). I haven't even been to the office yet. I'm still trying to find out what programs to continue, what are the problems, the challenges. I'm in the process of learning," Duque said.

He said he would see how the CSC could improve systems and services for civil servants and enhance professionalism, integrity, responsiveness, efficiency and courtesy among state workers.

Duque expressed hope that any challenges he would face with the CSC would be relatively lighter than those he faced when he was appointed in 2006 to lead the Department of Health.

Cabral yesterday said it was only on Friday when Bunoan told her about her transfer to the health department.

Honored to serve

"I am honored to serve the Filipino people in (the capacity) just as I was honored to serve them for four years as social welfare secretary," she said when sought for reaction to her new assignment.

In her text message to the reporter, Cabral thanked the Arroyo for "yet another opportunity to be of service to the country."

"In the limited time that I will have (at health secretary), I will do my best to continue the good programs of Sec. Duque, particularly in reducing the inequities in health care," Cabral said.

She also praised her colleagues at the Department of Social Welfare and Development, with whom she had worked not only in poverty alleviation programs but also in helping victims of calamities such as those caused by Tropical Storm "Ondoy" and Typhoon "Pepeng," and people displaced by the fighting in Maguindanao.

"I am so proud of them and thank the nine I spent with them. At the same time, I look forward to working with another special group of public servants newest the improved health of all Filipinos," Cabral said.

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SWS slip warning sign for Noynoy to shape up

From page A1

as surpasses the lead he enjoyed before Aquino declared his candidacy on Sept. 5 last year—an event that reshuffle the electoral map.

The latest SWS survey not only reveals the size of Aquino's decline and that of Villar's gains. But more important is that is a portent to what her Villar will remain viable as the "strong challenger to dismount Aquino, as the rest of the known presidential contenders drop out.

The survey has given heart to Villar's campaign that has been demoralized by the survey results of the past three months showing Aquino romping far ahead of the pack until its 10 percent lead.

The surveys in the next couple of months are crucial to the survival of Villar's candidacy as the race develops into a three-cornered fight, with a possible face-off between him and Aquino as the leading contenders, and with Loksin CMO-Kampi-Reporma standard-bearer Senate Senator Gilbert Teodoro Jr., as a third force.

The SWS-reported survey showed Aquino was leading with 44 percent of 2,100 respondents nationwide. Villar obtained 30 percent, narrowing the gap with Aquino to 11 percentage points—an improvement in ratings from the 27 percent he got in the earlier Dec. 5-18 SWS survey. The survey was commissioned by Villar's congressional allies.

Waning Cory spell

Villar gained 6 percentage points in the three months between the two surveys. Aquino obtained 46 percent in the earlier survey, leading Villar by 19 percentage points. Indicating that the emotional spell of Cory Aquino's death was waning, Senator Aquino's rating has been dipping, from 59 percent in the first 4-8 outing to 46 percent in the Dec. 5-18 survey.

Villar's effort claimed the senator "seems to have benefited from the shift in voting preferences over the last three weeks in December as respondents rose to put a premium on personal competence, leadership and strength rather than "name recognition" rivals have been hammering. Villar has much to do to overcome his deficits.

The pinned survey showed the marginalization of other presidential aspirants. Deposed President Joseph Estrada remained in third place but shed one point to the new survey to take 18 percent, down from his previous 19 percent, reducing him virtually to a nuisance candidate.

Estrada's reassurance the defiance that as a self-proclaimed champion of the poor and the masses, he still has a chance to be elected president after he was deposed by Edsa II and was convicted by the estrapad court of plunder during his short-lived presidency.

The ratings of Teodoro remained at 5 percent, similar to his Dec. 5-10 rating, but too insignificant to catch up with Aquino's and even Villar's. Sen. Richard Gordon scored 0.5 percent in the Dec. 5-18 survey, along with five others too inconsequential to mention.

Lackluster performance

Although Villar gained 6 percentage points in the latest survey, it's hard for him to make a case that he has developed into a formidable opponent of Aquino, enough to overhaul the latter's 44-percent rating. The gap of 11 percentage points between Aquino and Villar is quite a chasm.

Drawing blood from the survey results, Aquino's rivals have pinged up on him to emphasize the issue of his inexperience and lackluster performance in Congress. At a forum last week of presidential aspirants, including Villar and Aquino, conducted by GMA 7 at Alabang, Villar smacked Aquino's purported lack of competence and experience to lead the nation.

Few of the presidential aspirants have executive experience. Villar is one of the few who have. Only President Arroyo, who is also Senator Villar's presidential nephew, is leading Villar and Aquino, anointed by GMA 7 at Alabang. Villar smacked Aquino's purported lack of competence and experience to lead the nation.

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Have you fixed your town?

Gordon told Aquino: "The record of service is important. Can you really do your job? Before you left your position, have you fixed your town?" Aquino had no answer.

Gordon said Aquino had never held an executive post. But does Villar have executive experience? Villar said at the forum, "I agree with Senator Gordon that in the end, it is what you have done and demonstrated in the past that matters."

Nobody in the forum asked if any of the candidates—Villar, Aquino, Gordon and Teodoro—could be trusted to provide an honest government. Integrity underlines the campaign theme of Aquino.

No one asked in the forum about Villar's case in the Senate over alleged conflict of interest in the ethanol issue of the coalition of which the 17 senators passing through his property increasing its commercial value.

The Senate committee of the whole has not issued its decision on the U.S. issue, leaving it as a cloud over Villar's presidential candidacy. Villar has not attended the meeting of the committee.

Whether the Senate issues a decision before the election or whether the shift of Villar's focus to the experience and competence issues would allow him to gain political mileage to overhaul Aquino's commanding lead in the surveys remains to be seen.

Villar has much more to explain to the electorate for his real estate transactions than Aquino for his executive inexperience and lackluster performance in Congress.

Can Villar saving public opinion in his favor to mount a credible challenge to Aquino?

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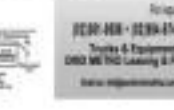

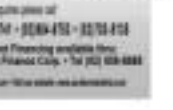

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Corrections

IN THE JAN. 5 ISSUE, the lament story on the Second Front Page—"Few trade bad for boom, warns scion"—erroneously referred to Alfonzo party list Rep. Walden Bello as a sociology professor on leave from the University of the Philippines. Bello has resigned from his UP post.

* * *

IN THE JAN. 9 ISSUE, the banner story on the front page—"Villar cuts Nonoy lead"—misstated that Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. had narrowed to 11 percent the lead of Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III in the latest Social Weather Stations survey on presidential preferences. Forty-four percent of the respondents chose Aquino while 33 percent picked Villar, giving Aquino a lead of 11 percentage points—not 11 percent. Put another way, the survey showed Aquino with a 33 percent lead over Villar. In other words, for every three respondents who preferred Villar, there were four who preferred Aquino.

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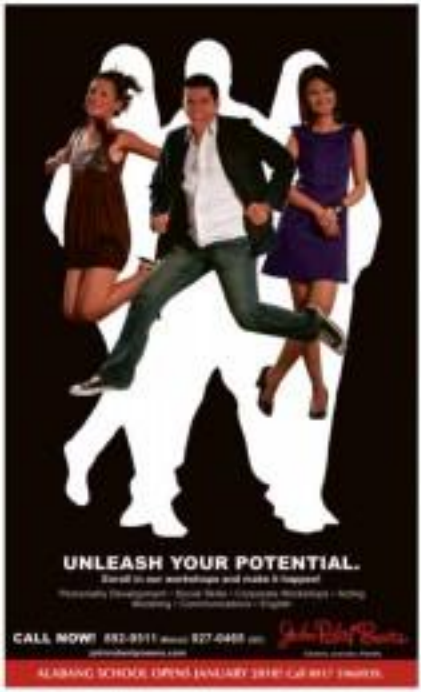

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Noy hits back at Manny

VILLAR

AQUINO

Front page 6

City and administrator of Subic Bay Freeport and the Philippine National Red Cross, has also been blasting Aquino on the issue of competency.

Gordon said Aquino had not done anything to improve even his own bureaucracy. Aquino said he did not. Ohh, it was worth his while to comment on the remarks of a poll imbecile. Gordon is among those at the bottom of popularity surveys.

You talking about yourself?

"When I hear them say this, I say 'Are you talking about me or are you talking about yourself?'" Aquino said. "This is a good thing ... to have face-to-face debates so that we can go head on."

Aquino quoted Nilo as saying that during the "Hello Garci" scandal, it was then Cavite Rep. Gilbert Remulla, who is now the MV spokesperson, who was in the front while it was MP Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano who kept on hammering on the NBN-ZTE scam, a deal to sell the nation's bureaucracy digitally that was swathed in no resolution of bribery and corruption.

"I'm saying this in the context of his statement that he is not a person who easily picks fights. But if you see something wrong, aren't you supposed to do something about it? Why didn't [you do that] what the others did?" Aquino said.

"How can we be sure that when you're the one already in the leadership position, you'll also do what your colleagues did?" he said.

'What have you done?'

"After all the sound bites, what's important is what you have done. I've followed through on all my commitments. I can [implement reforms]. I will. I have to," Aquino added.

He said that he even lost his position as deputy House Speaker when he took the Arroyo administration to task for the "Hello Garci" scandal, referring to the purported wiretapped phone conversation between President Macapagal-Arroyo and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

Cullo too said that Aquino owes evidence Mr. Arroyo stole the 2004 presidential election. He denies any wrongdoing.

"When you see that there is oppression and you do nothing, you are to effect also supporting that oppressive system," Aquino added.

Not in oust-GMA moves

Beautiful he certainly, Remulla said that Aquino, the Liberal Party standard-bearer, was "never in the forefront" in the failed efforts in the House of Representatives when he was the Tarlac representative to impeach Mr. Arroyo over the "Hello Garci" scandal.

"The question is where was he? Never in the impeachment, he was never in the forefront. He could not even get his Liberal Party to a ballot in the House, in order to vote to impeach [Mr. Arroyo]," Remulla said.

"Senator Miller was in the background giving all our support to us," he said, adding that even Miller's wife, Lar Pilar Rep. Cynthia Miller, was supportive of the attempt to oust Ms. Arroyo.

Remulla also said that during the "parking" scandal it was Senator Miller who chaired the hearings that produced Jueteng Cops and other witnesses against the Arroyo administration.

"Senator Aquino should be careful in what he says because his record is not exemplary at all," he added.

Nike salesman, reformer

Defending himself on the issue of competence, Aquino pointed to his experience in the private sector. He said he was a member of the team that helped Nike become popular in the country in the mid-1980s.

He said he also helped Goodyear restore its supermarket production to his family's Hacienda Luisita.

But more importantly, Aquino said that he had been keen on his role as a facilitator as a congressman and senator.

He said he acted as a reform for Armed Forces' procurement process, particularly in its oil supply by requiring public bidding.

Aquino said he also tried to have a short oversight committee formed in Congress to determine if the billions in unaccounted intelligence funds of government agencies were spent for their intended purposes.

Aquino said he was confident that he would be able to successfully implement real change in the country if he won the presidency because he also expected his base of supporters to take his administration to task if it failed to deliver on its promises.

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UP student, pal killed in clash with troops

MAGALSON, ... QUEZON—A student of the University of the Philippines-Los Baños and a colleague were killed in what the Army said was an encounter with suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Macalelon, Quezon, Saturday morning.

Relatives identified the UPLB student as Ian Madeniro, 20, a Agricultural Chemistry student. Madeniro was a former UPLB Student Council member and a member of the Pi Sigma Fraternity.

In the military report, he was identified only as "Ian Madeniro."

The military identified the other casualty as Marlon Peñaherrosos, reportedly a resident of Barangay Sitio Florenos, Macalelon.

The remains of the two were brought by the police to Pamunuta Pagbilao in Quezon City for autopsy.

Lt. Col. Gerardo Sheroan Jr., commander of the Army's 76th Infantry Battalion based in the Bondoc Peninsula, said the military responded to a tip at about 10:30 a.m. on the presence of seven armed suspected communist guerrillas in Sitio Pele, Barangay Gango, Lim along the Maputi-Nuevo Highway.

According to Valencia, the battalion's Bravo Company assisted by the Macalelon municipal police engaged the alleged rebels in a firefight that lasted about 30 minutes. The rebels scampered in different directions, leaving behind the two bodies. Jaffe T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, January 11, 2010
Baptism of the Lord

1st Reading: Is 55:1-11

Come here, all you who are thirsty, come to the water!

All who have no money need!

Buy, without money and at no cost, buy and drink wine and milk.

Why spend money on what is not food and labor for what does not satisfy? Listen to me, and you will eat well, you will enjoy the richest of fare.

Isaiah: your ear and come to me; listen, that your soul may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, I will fulfill to you my promises to David.

See, I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the people. Likewise, you will summon a nation unknown to you, and nations that do not know you will come hurrying to you for the sake of Yahweh your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

Seek Yahweh while he may be found; call to him while he is near.

Let the wicked abandon his way, let him forsake his thoughts, let him return to Yahweh: he will have mercy, for our God is generous in forgiveness.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways are not your ways, says Yahweh.

For as heavens are above the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts.

As the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return till they have watered the earth, making it yield seed for the sower and food for others to eat, so is my word that goes forth out of my mouth; it will not return to me idle, but it shall accomplish my will, my purpose for which I sent it.

2nd Reading: 1 Jn 5:1-9

All those who believe that Jesus is the Anointed, are born of God; and every lover of the Father loves the Son. How may we know that we love the children of God? If we love God and fulfill his commands, for God's love is to observe his commands. In fact, his commandments are not a burden because all those born of God overcome the world. And the victory which overcomes the world is our faith. Who else overcomes the world? The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus Christ was acknowledged through water, but also through blood.

Not only water but water and blood.

And the Spirit, too, witnesses to him for the Spirit is truth.

There are three who bear witness: the Spirit, the water and the blood, and these three witnesses agree.

If we accept human testimony, with greater reason must we accept that of God, given in favor of his Son.

Gospel: Mk 1:7-11

John the Baptist preached to the people saying, "After me comes one who is more powerful than I am, I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit. As for me, I am not worthy to bend down and untie his sandals."

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth, a town of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And the moment he came up out of the water, heaven opened before him and he saw the Spirit coming down on him like a dove, and these words were heard from heaven: "You are my Son, the Beloved, On Whom I have set my love."

Commentary:

In the original language of the Bible, the word "baptism" means "to submerge," "to drink." In the early Church, the rite of baptism was often performed through the total immersion of the new convert. This image is powerful and worthy of our reflection.

Baptism is entrance into the life of Jesus Christ and His Church. This life is not a holiday nor is it vacation. The life of following Jesus entails our total commitment to following Him and living according to His will. We do not dabble in discipleship, nor is it a hobby or hobby. Following Jesus is a full time endeavor. As Jesus gave His all to God in total love for us, so are we called to give everything we have to give as we follow Him in the same way of life. May our participation in the Sunday Eucharist nurture our commitment to be good and faithful servants of the compassionate gift the Lord bestows upon us, the gift of new and everlasting life.

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GMA can appoint Puno replacement

From page A1

taken by former Senate President Franklin Drilon, who raised legal questions about Ms Arroyo's meetings overseas to Puno.

Puno will retire on May 17, after the country shall have elected a new president and 45 days before the constitutionally mandated transfer of power from Ms Arroyo to her successor on June 30.

The President is allowed to appoint the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court upon the occurrence of the vacancy," said Cabinet Secretary Silvestre Bello III, himself a former justice secretary like Drilon.

But Bello, who is also running for senator, acknowledged as a "gray area" the constitutional provision preventing the President from making appointments during the last three months of her term.

"The provision of the Constitution is clear about the appointment of members of the judiciary within the prohibitive period—which is 90 days before the election—but we cannot afford a hiatus," he said.

Neither required nor allowed

Bello said the provision must be reconciled with the desire in the framework in the Constitution to prevent an interruption.

In a commentary published by the Inquirer, Drilon cited a Supreme Court ruling saying that the President "was neither required to make appointments to the courts nor allowed to do so during the last 90 days of his/her term."

Drilon, the national chair of the Liberal Party and one of its senatorial candidates in the May 10 elections, noted two seemingly conflicting provisions.

"Article VIII, Section 4(1) of the Constitution provides that any vacancy in the Supreme Court shall be filled within 90 days of the occurrence," he said.

"On the other hand, Article VII, Section 15 of the Constitution provides that two months immediately before the next presidential election and up to the end of his/her term, a President or acting President shall not make appointments except temporary appointments to executive positions when continued vacancies will prejudice or endanger public safety," he added.

Drilon said questions about the tribunal's independence had cropped up because practically all members of the Supreme Court are Mrs Arroyo's appointees.

Since he retires, Ms Arroyo has named all of the high court's 15 magistrates. Puno was named to the tribunal in 1993 by President Fidel V. Ramos, but it was Ms Arroyo who named him Chief Justice.

Drilon also called for the removal from the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) of the justice secretary and two representatives from Congress to maintain the nominating process from political influence.

The JBC is tasked with submitting a list of nominees from which the President chooses to fill any vacant position in the Supreme Court.

Bello, a lawyer, said Section 8(1) of Article VIII of the Constitution applied only to appointments to the "executive department."

"If you will go to the provisions in the judicial department in our Constitution, that provision is not included," he said.

Mendoza cautioned against appointing an acting Chief Justice, saying such an appointee would not be "embedded" in the next President. "There will be too much politics there," he said.

He said a conflict of interest could arise if an acting Chief Justice were named and the proclaimed winner of the May presidential election were involved in a case pending in the Presidential Electoral Tribunal headed by Supreme Court justices.

"We cannot afford to have a vacuum in our Supreme Court. It will be no different from having no President, Speaker or Senate President ... We can't afford not to have a Chief Justice from May 17 to June 30," Mendoza said.

Then the President has the power to appoint a Chief Justice and the should elect is seven during the prohibitive period, according to Speaker Prospero Nograles.

Petty concerns

Senate Sen. Ejercito Estrada said concerns that the President would violate the Constitution by appointing a new chief justice during the prohibitive period were "petty" compared with the risks that the country would face without someone at the helm of the high court.

"It's too dangerous not to have a top man at the Supreme Court because the high court will be the one to provide stability during the transition when the leaders of the two other branches of government are being replaced," Santiago said.

Quezon City Rep. Marisa Dubouzet Jr., chair of the House justice committee, said that without a Chief Justice, "who would sign the tribunal's on] decisions and who would be the next in line to succeed the President after the Vice President, Senate President and House Speaker are out of power?"

Dubouzet is a member of the JBC, which he urged to convene with a list of candidates before replaces Puno a week after the elections.

"Whether or not the Supreme Court would allow the President to make an appointment during the prohibitive period is for the high court to decide. What is important is the JBC has played its role of coming with a list of candidates from which the President would choose," Dubouzet said.

But Deputy Minority Rep. Samir Gonzalez said the Senate's "midnight appointment" of a Chief Justice could have similarly damaging results on the integrity of the Supreme Court.

"If Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo appoints a new Chief Justice before the latter exit, she would leave behind a Supreme Court fully appointed by her (which may suffer the stigma of being a 'GMA Supreme Court,'" Gonzalez said.

Sen. Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan urged the JBC to do its subsequently a list of possible replacements for Puno so that Malacañang would not be able to make a "midnight appointment" on the judiciary's top post.

Pangilinan, a member of the Liberal Party like Drilon, said the JBC should insist on its independence after a JBC member, Justice Secretary urged his colleagues to nominate a successor to Puno even before he retires.

"In order to prevent ... Malacañang from making a midnight appointment for the post of chief justice of the Supreme Court, all the JBC has to do is refuse to submit a short list to Malacañang," Pangilinan said.

"By doing this, Malacañang will have no basis to issue an appointment as it must be prepared by the JBC in a constitutional requirement for a valid appointment to the Supreme Court," Pangilinan added.

SC rules against 'RJ' on prime property

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE SUPREME COURT has reaffirmed a Makati regional trial court (RTC) order allowing musician-businessman Ramon "RJ" Jacinto to regain a piece of prime real estate at the corner of Paseo de Roxas and Gil Puyat (formerly Buendia) Avenue in Makati City which had been foreclosed by the Philippine National Bank (PNB).

The high court's Second Division upheld the Court of Appeals (CA) ruling that set aside the March 2009 order of Makati RTC Judge Rommel Baybay which had reversed the annotated "Buendia property" to Jacinto's RJ Ventures Realty and Development Corp. and Rajah Broadcasting Network Inc.

"We fully agree with the conclusion of the CA that RTC Makati City Branch 132 had no jurisdiction to issue a writ of execution under the terms it granted; to order willfully ousted the sheriff of the division sought to be executed," the high tribunal said.

It said Jacinto's company "failed to show any extendible error on the part of the CA in its ruling."

Cargin inhibits

Associate Justice Antonio Cargin inhibited himself from the deliberations due to his close relation to a party to the case.

The Court of Appeals had denied Jacinto's appeal for reversal of its July 24, 2009, ruling ordering the Makati RTC to restore possession of the 8,880-square-meter Buendia property to PNB.

The property was foreclosed on by PNB after RJ Ventures Realty failed to pay its loan amounting to more than P4 billion.

The appellate court said the original Supreme Court decision of Sept. 27, 2006, did not talk about the annotation of the Buendia property to RJ Ventures or of the Tagaytay properties to RJR Development Corp.

It said what the high court had allowed was for Jacinto to retain possession of certain chattel mortgages that covered only the broadcasting equipment of Rajah Broadcasting Network in several parts of the country.

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Cities seek reversal of SC ruling on towns

By Dona Pazolygan

THE LEAGUE OF CITIES OF the Philippines (LCP) has asked the Supreme Court to reconsider its decision allowing for the creation of 16 towns.

Reminding the high tribunal that it had already ruled with finality in March last year, the LCP asked the Supreme Court to reverse its December 2009 ruling that upheld the creation of 16 new cities.

The LCP said the high court's reversal of its own final decision was unconstitutional, set a bad precedent and "will thereby the well-established legal principles on finality of judgment."

The Supreme Court issued a new decision on Dec. 22, 2009 that reversed its earlier ruling on March 10, 2009 that nullified the 16 towns that were passed by Congress converting 16 municipalities into cities.

In a motion to annul the latest decision, the LCP reminded the high court that it had denied appeals made by several municipal mayors on March 31, 2009, and again on April 28, 2009, and declared that "no further pleadings shall be entertained."

But the Supreme Court went ahead and reversed its own supposedly final and executory decision on Dec. 22, 2009. But time ruling that the disbarred lawyers were dismissed.

The municipalities are Bayhon in Leyte, Sogod in Cebu, Calbayog in Samar, Tayabas in Quezon province, Laoang in Samar, and Tabuk in Kalinga.

The other municipalities are Bayugan in Agusan del Sur, those in Roxas/Santa, Mati in Davao Oriental, Gingoog in Misamis Oriental, Cabadbaran in Agusan del Norte, Cabarroguis in Quirino, El Salvador in Misamis Oriental, and Naga in Cebu.

"This reversal of a final decision] will set a bad precedent and will disturb the well-established legal principles on finality of judgment," the LCP said in a motion to annul the latest decision.

It said the original court decision nullifying the 16 newly created cities was already implemented by the Commission on Elections and the Department of Budget and Management which issued a circular on June 30, 2009, for the fiscal internal revenue allotment (IRA) of cities and municipalities for 2009.

More Pinoys keeping peace around world

THE NUMBER OF FILIPINOS DEPLOYED with United Nations peacekeeping forces is on an all-time high with more than 1,000 military and policemen serving in various conflict areas around the world.

In his annual report to Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, Ambassador Hilario Davide Jr., permanent representative to the United Nations, said the Philippines had a total of 1,050 peacekeepers in nine UN peacekeeping missions at the end of 2009.

"We are proud of the fact that despite our limited resources, we were still able to fulfill our obligations as a member of the family of nations," Davide said.

He also assured the UN that it could continue to count on the Philippines as a "responsible and reliable" peacekeeping partner.

In a statement from UN headquarters in New York, Davide said the figure, which represents a 40-percent surge in troop deployment compared to the previous years, pushed the Philippines up to the 23rd on the list of the top troop and police contributing countries.

The Philippines was 29th on the list with 826 peacekeepers deployed as the end of 2008.

"The 466 officers and enlisted personnel from the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the 433 officers from the Philippine National Police currently serving with the 10 missions are the largest number of Filipino peacekeepers deployed overseas since the Philippines participated in the first UN peacekeeping operations during the term of President Diosdado Macapagal," Davide said.

The Philippines first participated in UN peacekeeping operations in 1963 when it contributed a 46-member squadron from the Philippine Air Force to provide air support for the UN mission in the Congo.

Since then, Filipino peacekeepers have participated in 20 operations in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Burundi, Ivory Coast, Sudan's Darfur and southern regions, Georgia, Golan Heights in the Palestinian territories, Haiti, Iraq, Liberia, the Kashmir regions disputed by Pakistan and India, Kosovo, Nepal and East Timor.

Jerome Aning

Wilfredo H. Pacres, 55

WILFREDO HERMOSA PACRES DIED ON Jan. 9 at the age of 55.

He is survived by his wife Ellen, children Sylvia Jr., 29 and Paolo, mother Leonora, and siblings Modesta and Maria, Theresa, Eleonor, and Mercy and Leo.

His body lies at Pinecrest Par, Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque City. Interment is on Jan. 13 after the necrological service at 9 a.m.

Torres High '73 reunion

THE THS 1973 FOUNDATION INC. has called on all Torres High School Class 73 graduates to attend the 37th reunion on Jan. 23 at the Torres High School oval.

For details, contact the THS Batch 73 reunion at Cita Orbeciada, 4284764/ 09178900738 or Edith Francisco, 2354681/09183603750.

Pinoys warned about new recruitment scam

By Jerome Aning

THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (DFA) has warned Filipinos seeking jobs abroad about a new recruitment scam which the Philippine embassy in Germany uncovered.

In a statement, the DFA said two Filipinos contacted the embassy for help in verifying the contract of employment they turned Manfred Fraser International, located in the northern German city of Bremen, which had informed the two through e-mail that they would be hired by the firm.

But the company had one condition for the jobs. They first had to pay 70 euros (about P4,000) through Western Union to an employment company based in Vienna, a city in Hitler's homeland Austria.

The Philippine embassy discovered that Manfred Fraser International was non-existent, was not registered with the Bremen Chamber of Commerce and Industry, had a fictitious address, had no telephone and fax numbers, and was using a host in the United States for its Google e-mail.

"The embassy is convinced this recruitment scheme is another variation of the Nigerian 4-1-9 advance fee scam designed to victimize unsuspecting Filipino jobseekers," charge d'affaires Claudette Quesada Mangaoang said.

The Nigerian 4-1-9 scam, also known as the Nigerian advance fee scheme, involves the receipt of an unsolicited letter allegedly from a Nigerian General Bank employee or from the Nigerian government. It is named after the section of the Nigerian penal code which tackles fraudulent schemes.

The embassy has warned Filipino jobseekers of the new scam and has asked the DFA to bring the matter to the attention of relevant authorities such as the Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Justice and Philippine National Police.

Meanwhile, an overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) group yesterday called on the Philippine government to do something about the "unabated" illegal recruitment of OFWs in Macau.

Cecilia Tellez, executive director of the Migration for Migrant Workers (MFMW) based in Hong Kong, said the Philippine government was ignoring the victims of illegal recruitment.

MFMW called on the government to provide repatriation assistance, such as temporary shelter, legal counsel and air passage, to all victims of illegal recruitment, and to arrest and prosecute all illegal recruiters of Filipinos in Macau.

According to Tellez, MFMW handled nearly 30 OFWs who were victims of illegal recruitment to Macau in the fourth quarter of 2009.

Thirteen OFWs had sought the assistance of the Philippine Catholic Pastoral Center and Migrants House. Tellez said the group sought the assistance of the Philippine consulate on Jan 5.

"We were told by the assistance to nationals section officer that we cannot get any assistance from them and they even blamed us for our plight," Tellez quoted one of the OFWs, Dan Gallagher, as saying.

DFA seeks revisions to new immigration bill

By Jerry E. Esplanada

THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (DFA) has joined the Department of Justice (DOJ) and other government agencies in seeking further revisions in the proposed immigration and naturalization bills pending in Congress.

The DFA "welcomes the consideration by Congress of the proposed Philippine Immigration and Naturalization Act (PINA) of 2009."

"There is a long felt need to update and modernize our policies on border security, entry and exit of foreigners and the monitoring of their stay," said DFA spokesperson Ed Malaya.

However, the DFA "would like to seek revisions to certain provisions that raise jurisdictional issues affecting the conduct of foreign relations or may have national security implications," Malaya said over the weekend.

Ruben Javier Secretary Agnes Devanadera said some provisions in the proposed measure, which aims to amend the the term of immigration, the new e-Court Body were also noted affected.

The HNA bill was approved on third reading in the House of Representatives and on second reading in the Senate.

Devanadera, who exercises administrative supervision over the IS, said the proposed measure would jeal the country's security at risk.

According to Malaya, the DFA submitted its recommendations in both Malacañang and the IS on the PINA bill.

Among the provisions the DFA wants deleted or reconsidered are the additional powers for the new immigration body that are in conflict with the existing mandates of other government departments, notably its proposed exclusive authority to issue visas, in deployment of representative overseas and to licensing the sole dissemination to nationalities to comply with the proposed abolition of the Special Committee on Naturalization (SCN), he said.

The SCN groups the Office of the Solicitor General, DOJ, and the Office of the Solicitor General, Malaya.

"It was agreed that visa issuance should be retained by [DFA] since it is directly related to the conduct of diplomacy and is part of consular work. In particular, the issuance of visas to foreign diplomats—in international practice—is always reserved to and done by foreign ministries in view of the immunities and privileges extended to these officials," Malaya said.

He also said the deployment of immigration attaches would not be cost-effective as visa issuance was already being performed by well-trained consular officers.

"What is needed is closer coordination between embassies and the IS. With new communication technologies available nowadays, this can easily be done," Malaya quoted so-called DFA official as saying.

Special visas generate many jobs

THE BUREAU OF Immigration (BI) revealed that 33,000 new job seekers created for Filipinos last year other than dislocated foreign businessmen and their dependents from 31 countries who were granted indefinite visas by the government.

In answers to Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan, BI legal officer Cris Villalobos said the government collected more than P1 million in fees from the foreigners, mainly Koreans and Chinese, who availed themselves of the recently introduced special visa for employment generation (SVEG).

The government has been offering the special visa for over a year to foreigners with companies that would employ at least 10 full-time Filipino workers. The holder of this visa can stay in the country for two consecutive years.

Villalobos, who heads the SVEG one-stop shop, reported that licensees tapped the fee with 320 SVEG recipients, followed by 41 Chinese, 17 Taiwanese, 16 Americans, 11 Britons, 10 Australians, nine Japanese, nine Indians, seven Malaysians and six Singaporeans. Jerome Aning

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Probe of Smartmatic coordinator pushed

From page A1

showed that Smartmatic had "unwittingly or unwittingly hired people associated with the Ampatuans" in their supervisory and higher posts for the automated polls in the entire Mindanao.

He said that for a known political clan to control any part of the electoral exercise was "not right."

The senator said Smartmatic reportedly hired a certain Antolin "Nonoy" Oaypen last month as its provincial coordinator in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) "at the behest of the Ampatuans."

"While there is nothing essentially wrong with being identified with the Ampatuans, Smartmatic should refrain from giving the impression that the dominant political clan in Maguindanao can sway the appointment of its personnel who have a heavy duty to perform in the automation election[s] in that area," Pimentel said.

Subversion by cheats

"Even if the bets and most honest people are hired to man the machines, they may be in the midst of riots following the decision of their supervisors, if the latter are under the control of politicians," he added.

Pimentel noted that members of the Ampatuan clan were facing murder and rebellion charges in connection with the Maguindanao massacre.

He added that the clan had been credited with delivering the crucial swing votes for the administration in the elections of 2004 and 2007 through the use of threat and intimidation in Maguindanao.

Pimentel urged the Comelec "not to have a repeller anybody over the ballot" and cling to its belief that the automated elections cannot be "subverted by cheats."

"If there's a will to cheat, there would always be a way. I am speaking from experience as a election poll head. Like my cousin who got a new deal in the counting of votes in Maguindanao," he said.

The senator's namesake son have pending electoral protest against Sen. Miguel Zubiri for the 12th seating slot in the 2007 senatorial elections. Philip C. Tubeza

PIMENTEL

10 flights canceled due to bad weather

TEN DOMESTIC FLIGHTS WERE canceled yesterday at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport due to bad weather in the eastern parts of the Visayas and Mindanao.

Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) media affairs chief Connie Bungay said that two planes returned to Manila after being unable to land at the airports in Legazpi City and Catarman, Eastern Samar.

These were Cebu Pacific flight 5J 325 and 4G Philippines flight 19 629, which were supposed to arrive at their destinations at 6 a.m. and 8:15 a.m., respectively.

Consequently the planes' return flights were also canceled.

The other flights canceled were Philippine Air Lines' flight PR 277 to Legazpi; two other Cebu Pacific flights to Legazpi and Catarman, 5J 223 and 5J 771; and their return flights to Manila.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration said the cause of the rough of a low pressure area extended across eastern Visayas and Mindanao.

The low reports still experience "mostly cloudy skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms becoming cloudy with widespread rain showers over eastern Mindanao," Pagasa said in its forecast. Jeremie Arnig

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BDO

Why light worsens migraine

From page A4

worsen these headaches.

In a paper published online in the journal Nature Neuroscience, the researchers reported how they probed two groups of migraine-suffering blind individuals.

One group consisted of six people who were totally blind and immune to the normal sleep-wakefulness cycle caused by day-light and night.

The other group was made up of 14 people who were "legally blind" because of degenerative diseases of the eyes. They could detect the presence of light and followed the sleep-wakefulness cycle, although they could not perceive images.

"While the patients in the first group did not experience any worsening of their headaches from light exposure, the patients in the second group clearly described intensified pain when they were exposed to light, in particular blue or grey," said senior author Rami Burstein.

"This suggested to us that the mechanism of photophobia must involve the optic nerve, because in totally blind individuals, the optic nerve does not carry light signals to the brain," Burstein added.

The team theorized that the culprit had to be recently discovered retinal cells that have melanopsin photoreceptors—light-sensitive biological triggers for sleep and wakefulness.

"These are the only functioning light receptors left among patients who are legally blind," Burstein explained.

Test on lab rats

The next step was to test the virus on lab rats.

Using dyes injected into the rodents' eyes, the scientists were able to trace the pathways from the melanopsin retinal cells through the optic nerve and to the brain, where they found a group of neurons that became activated during migraines.

Tiny electrodes inserted into the rats' brains determined that, within seconds, light unleashed a surge of electrical activity in these cells—and the cells remained switched on even after the light was removed.

"This helps explain why patients say that their headache intensifies within seconds after exposure to light and improves 20 to 30 minutes after being in the dark," Burstein said.

Burstein and his team hope their work could be a boon for migraine sufferers, saying their study opens up exploratory options for drugs that block the pathway and enable a migraine patient to endure light without added pain.

Migraines are a widely researched disorder, although the causes remain unclear.

They are believed to develop when pressure sensitizes surrounding the brain becomes irritated. This stimulates pain receptors and, in turn, causes sensory neurons in brain to become activated for long periods. AFP

DTI enters fray between tuna firms

THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH A company having a loyalty program for its dealers, according to a government trade official.

Trade and Industry Undersecretary Jesusita Magbuyo said the voluntary loyalty program of Century Tuna could not be considered unfair or illegal since it appeared to be a marketing tool and an incentive for hard retailers.

Magbuyo made the statement in response to a complaint by rival canned tuna maker, CDO Foodphoria, which charged that Century's loyalty program was tantamount to an unfair trade practice in that it tended to block the entry of new players in the canned tuna market.

CDO Foodphoria, which entered the local canned tuna market in mid-2009, makes the Master Corned Tuna.

The Century Pacific Group, on the other hand, is a pioneer in the canned tuna industry and claimed that it currently holds 90 percent of the local market.

In a press statement, Century Tuna said Magbuyo's statement was vindication that it did not engage in unfair trade practices.

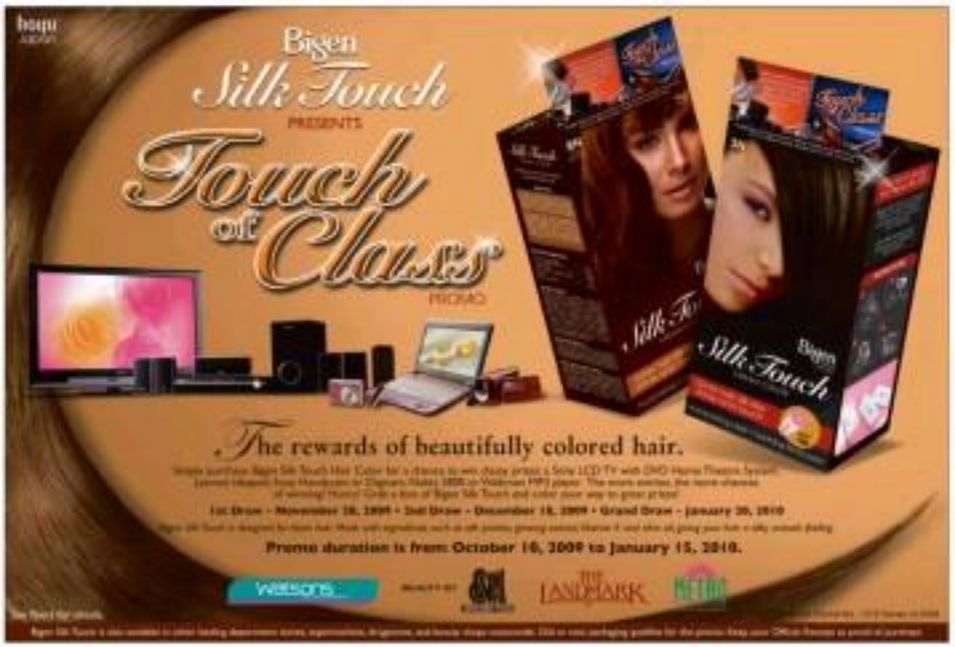
Magbuyo said CDO failed to submit an affidavit and file a formal complaint with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

She said the DTI will set a meeting between the two manufacturers to settle the issue.

"The DTI wants to avoid a legal battle between the two companies. We want the market to be open to both of them and we want them to operate peacefully," she said.

Century Tuna, however, said it was considering filing a civil suit against CDO for maligning the company in the business industry.

"The company is prepared to respond to the complaint at the proper time and forum," said Carlos Paulo Villanueva, Century (theCRC) lawyer.



PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Appointing the Chief

THE BLACK LETTER OF THE FUNDAMENTAL LAW is clear. Article VII, Section 15 of the Constitution specifically forbids an outgoing president from making what have come to be called "midnight appointments." The section, to its credit, reads: "Two months immediately before the next presidential elections and up to the end of his term, a President or Acting President shall not make appointments, except temporary appointments in executive positions when continued vacancies therein will prejudice public service or endanger public safety."

EDITORIAL

Thus, by express provision of the Constitution, President Macapagal-Arroyo can no longer name appointees, except temporary postings in the executive branch, beginning March 9 and until her successor takes his oath on June 30 this year.

Chief Justice Reynato Puno retires on May 17; his 70th birthday falls right in the middle of the period of prohibition. Any other person with a healthy respect for the rule of law and the processes of democracy, not to mention a strong sense of delicadeza, would understand the national interest in a straightforward way: Puno's successor should be named by the next President of the Philippines.

President Arroyo's allies in the administration coalition, however, have found a rationalization for her to violate the Constitution. Rep. Marian Dehesote, the representative of the House in the Judicial and Bar Council, has proposed that the JBC, which has the constitutional duty to nominate candidates for the Supreme Court, recommend a short list of replacements for Puno even before he retires—in order, Dehesote said, to avoid leaving the position "vacant even for a day."

In a letter to his fellow JBC members, Dehesote emphasized the importance of the chief justiceship: its occupant is not only the fifth in the line of presidential successors, but also the head of both the JBC and of the Presidential Electoral Tribunal. The eight-person JBC will meet today to discuss Dehesote's proposal.

Politics, we think, is behind this unusual request to fast-track the appointment of the next Chief Justice. Mr Arroyo's allies want her to circumvent the restrictions on appointments by allowing her to name the next Chief Justice before March 9. But both law and history are against Dehesote's indefensible suggestion.

Compared to the congressman's frantic proposal, the Constitution is a monument of massive calm. The pertinent provision, from Article VIII, Section 4 (1), states that "Any vacancy [in the Supreme Court] shall be filled within 90 days from the occurrence thereof." In other words, the government has until mid-August to name Puno's replacement.

At a time of rising political passions, with national attention increasingly focused on the presidential elections, the window of the Constitution's 90-day deadline appears even more persistent. Precisely because of the importance of the position, there is no excuse to rush the selection.

The settled law on midnight appointments, under the 1987 Constitution, is anchored on the exact same provision that pertains to the JBC's power to nominate a Supreme Court justice. The first paragraph of Article VIII, Section 9 reads: "The Members of the Supreme Court and judges of the lower courts shall be appointed by the President from a list of at least three nominees prepared by the Judicial and Bar Council for every vacancy. Such appointments need no confirmation." The defining case of Valenzuela and Aldaba rejected the midnight appointments of two "judges of the lower courts." Its scope, thus, must also cover "Members of the Supreme Court."

Not least, the history of the Court itself belies Dehesote's contention that the office of Chief Justice had never been vacant, not even for a day.

But the greater risk at stake concerns the proper role of an outgoing president. Both law and history are clear: That role is properly of a caretaker, a custodian who ensures that the transition of power, the defining characteristic of a republican democracy, takes place as scheduled. Dehesote's proposal tells us what President Arroyo's last years of the Nation Address confirmed: this President continues to struggle against the responsibilities of caretaker, and is loathe to let power go.

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Can GMA appoint a new CJ this early?

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE TRUE OF THE TOWN NOW IS WHO would be appointed as the next Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. (Chief Justice Puno steps down as its until May 17, but already there is jockeying for his position. The tradition is to appoint the most senior associate justice, in the present case Justice Antonio Carpio, but indications are that President Macapagal-Arroyo wants to appoint her own Supreme Court chief she can draw on President—for obvious reasons. With the deluge of court cases expected to be filed against her when she is no longer President and no longer immune from suit, GMA wants not only a sympathetic tribunal but a friendly Chief Justice.

Before she steps down this June, GMA will have appointed all the 11 members of the SC except CJ Puno who was appointed to the extended by President Fidel Ramos. That appointed of Chief Justice by GMA). And there is a post who was the proximity of that controversial SC decision declaring that President Joseph Estrada had "resigned" although there is no letter of resignation in existence anywhere. That was a legal principle. "Constructive resignation," invented in legislative the takeover of then-Vice President Gloria Arroyo. In it, the SC found nonsense that President Estrada had resigned although he had not.

GMA wants to appoint the next CJ before she steps down. Former Senate President Franklin Drilon had a learned discussion on this in yesterday's Inquirer, parts of which I will liberally repeat here for those who missed it.

"Under the 1987 Constitution, can an outgoing President appoint a successor to the vacancy of Chief Justice Puno?" Drilon asked in his article. The subject became important when Rep. Marian Dehesote, a member of the Judicial and Bar Council that, under the Charter, must nominate the successor to Puno, asked his colleagues in the JBC to nominate the successor to Puno even before he retires. Puno will retire four months from now, about 45 days before the constitutionally mandated transfer of presidential power from GMA to her successor on June 30, 2010. At that time, does GMA still have the authority to appoint a new CJ?

Drilon wrote: "Article VIII, Section 4(1) of the Constitution provides that any vacancy in the Supreme Court shall be filled within ninety days from the occurrence thereof."

"On the other hand, Article IX, section 15 of the same Constitution provides that after two months immediately before the next presidential elections and up to the end of his term, a President or Acting President shall not make any appointments except temporary appointments in executive positions when continued vacancies will prejudice or endanger public safety."

There is a precedent in this case. In 1998, the Supreme Court was confronted with a similar case called "In Re Appointments of Valenzuela and Aldaba." The question that faced the SC was that during the period when appointments are banned, is the President required to appoint a Regional Trial Court judge in view of Article 9(1), Section 9 which mandates that the President shall issue the appointment within 90 days from the submission of the list by the JBC?

The SC ruled in that case that during the period of the ban, or the prohibition against midnight appointments, the President cannot make such appointments in the event that the ban is within the 90-day of the President's term," the SC said.

"The court noted that the exception in Article VII, Section 15 ... allowing appointments to be made during the period of the ban therein provided—was much narrower than that recognized in the 1962 case of Aytona vs. Castillo," Drilon wrote.

"In that case, the Supreme Court struck down as illegal the so-called midnight appointments by then outgoing President Carlos P. Garcia, who issued 350 appointments in one day, in December 1961 and set the induction of the new officers a few hours before the inauguration of his successor, President Diosdado Macapagal.

"The Supreme Court ruled that the outgoing President is no more than a caretaker administration whose duty was to prepare for the orderly transfer of authority to the incoming President.

"In the Aytona vs. Castillo case, the SC took the view that the restriction on the President's appointing power prevailed over the timeframe for filling vacancies in the judiciary as the prevention of vote buying and similar evils outweighs the need of avoiding delays in filling up court vacancies or the disposition of some cases."

Under the present Charter, the President is required to appoint SC justices from a list submitted by the JBC. Congressman Dehesote has urged JBC members to submit a list of nominees for CJ long before the retirement of Puno. If the JBC, which is chaired by Puno himself, follows his suggestion, can the majority of the justices compel it to do so?

"The JBC was created as a limitation on the President's authority to appoint members of the judiciary and ostensibly, if not totally shield, judicial appointments from political pressures," Drilon wrote.

"The law is an imperfect world and set-ends on final judicial decisions making operators in a complex arena in which law and procedure are inevitably intertwined with personality preference and politics," Drilon adds.

"But government cannot uphold the rule of law and institute good governance without an independent judicial system free from external influence," he continues. "That is why we have instituted safeguards to minimize, if not prevent, intrusion into the process of judicial decision-making.

"Given these safeguards, can we say that we have a truly independent and effective justice system? Can we truly say that the toxic political environment we are today has not invaded our justice system?"

Justice

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

IT'S NOT JUST THAT JUSTICE DELAYED IS justice denied. It's also that justice unbelievably served is justice screwed.

At last, I don't even know that justice, selective or not, is being served on Hubillo Lacson for the murders of Bubby Dacer and his driver, Emmanuel Corbito. Of course there's direct evidence against him in the form of ex-Senate pres. Cesar Maranan saying that he had been told by Michael Ray Aquino to dispose of Dacer. But all that stands on the head of the pin that is Maranan's credibility. Did Maranan truly suffer amnesia during his exile in the US and felt compelled to tell what he knew a decade later, or is he just desperate to have the same resided in the US and ready to swear that Lacson had also lied then?

That is not something we can know under the present regime. I have no problem with Lacson being given a ground for the murders of Dacer and Corbito, and if found guilty punished grandly as well. But I have every problem with him being tried under this government. Or, since that is really a circuitous way of putting it, by this government. Whatever Lacson wants, Lacson gets. The justice department today has the distinction of being the one office next in line to Orwellian script, dismissing the opposite of what it says.

The only way we can really get to the bottom of this is to try Lacson under the next government. The kin of the victims have waited for justice for nine years, they can wait a few more months. That way they can be reasonably sure they'll get justice. Or more than that, they can be reasonably sure they won't be used for the ends of injustice.

The justice department itself is of Lacson's defense that the murder charges it has filed against him are just harassment, and says there's nothing political about it. Nominally I have nothing against persons who are political. If motivated, by myself as well as those who persist violently against it. What irritates others by government officials and/or politicians is not politically motivated? And the put is not wrong to call the kettle black, even if it is not the best revealer of the fact. But this is one case where the political motivation gets in the way of, well, everything, including the truth.

At the very least, it adds whole new dimensions to political motivations. It is politically motivated not just in the sense that it means to exact revenge on someone who has been relentless in exposing the ne'er-about-the-First Couple—both of them in equal measure—but in the sense that it means to draw attention away from the real total, the trial of the decade, the trial of the century, the trial that threatens to expose the true depths of the rot of this government. That is the trial of the Impeachment.

It is no coincidence that the justice department has decided to file charges against Lacson for possible murder at the very time that Isidol Amparano will stand trial for probable plunder together. In immediate terms to government is that it competes for attention with that other trial. Particularly if Lacson's trial is given full coverage—the trial of a senator for murder is natural front page and prime time material, and government itself will maintain a vast propaganda apparatus...the legal community, and/or the public can, and will, dismiss the trial values of the Impeachment trial. That shock value includes the potential of the impeachment to crash if the noose gets tighter.

More than that, the Lacson trial is bound to provoke comparisons about murder and due process. If legal niceties, or indeed technicalities, can apply to Lacson, why can't the same thing apply to the Impeachment? I wouldn't even put it past this regime to find Lacson guilty and the Impeachment innocent, the first on the strength of Maranan's word and the second in the absence of testified witnesses. If it wants to provoke a public outburst, the better to justify the elections, that's the way to go. This is one case where political motivation, or indeed deprivation, holds such homage under heavier guard than the title hazard.

In fact it's not just that selective justice is justice denied. It's also that justice selectively served is justice screwed.

In fact it's not just that selective justice is justice denied. It's also that justice selectively served is justice screwed. I have no problems with the law making huge lapses now and then, I have a problem with the law making huge lapses all the time. That is not a lapse, that is a policy. I have no problems with Lacson being prosecuted to the full extent of the law, but I have every problem with others who stood prosecuting as badly or patched earth much rain not being remotely so.

I have a problem with Norberto Gonzales and Avelino Fabparan not being haled to court for the slaughter of hundreds of activists, their complicity in it admitted to by witnesses for most plentiful and credible than Maranan and indeed by an independent UN agency headed by Philip Alston. I have a problem with GMA not being hounded to the ends of the earth for the counter thing. Talk of command responsibility, can any command responsibility be more eloquently commanding than the one held by the commander in chief over the creature of her military? That is not to speak of GMA actively promoting the cultivate of impunity that made those murders possible. And that is not to speak of her bigger crime of the murder of democracy, or plain decency.

The only way we can get at the bottom of the Dacer-Corbito murders is to try Lacson under a new government. Look at it this way too, which is the other side of midnight, or the flip side than political motivation in this case cuts in the way of truth. If Lacson is found guilty by the courts, then by the law that says that in the regime she aided are rewarded and the guilty punished, we must presume Lacson innocent. And a time'll be lost. There can be no justice to this world, or government.

Either way.

Dialoguing with CHEd

I HAVE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM CHED Chairman Emmanuel Angeles commenting on my article on CHEd and "mental fast" (Inquirer, 12-21-09) (Incidentally I have a rogue newsletter that the chairman mailed last October at the Internet about my time.) I thank him for his letter and especially for the opportunity to dialogue with him on matters of great concern for us educators. The chairman himself has published his letter by sending copies in various education offices.

First of all, Chairman Angeles clarifies that whatever power CHEd has over some 900 existing accrediting agencies comes from Executive Order 566. It is a portion of the EO says that accrediting associations "shall not be subjected by the Commission on Higher Education (CHEd) under pretexts of Institutional Quality Assurance and Standards Enhancement (IQUASE), provided that these accrediting agencies conform with a set of common standards formulated by a Coordinating Council (CCA), hereafter to be established by the CHEd."

I do not see in the above-cited section that whatever formulated ISO 705:4 method it envisaged fully. The text says that the standards would be formulated not by CHEd but by the CCA consisting of representatives of private accrediting associations. The standards, in other words, would be a form of self-regulation. CHEd would only be a watchdog to see if they freely agree to do it. CHED would then serve merely as a conduit for the standards. Thus EO 705: 4 itself in effect recognizes that CHEd has no authority over private accrediting associations.

I know that the DOJ, discussed perhaps by several law associates, released a legal opinion in favor of CHEd on this. The opinion was probably drafted by CHEd itself. I have to ask the DOJ how they could create CHEd powers out of nothing!

But for those who urge us to my shoulder and putting to me that CHEd was imposing "martial law" on accrediting associations, Chairman Angeles has this to say: "To my knowledge, Father, CHEd has not issued any governing policies, guidelines and requirements that mandate standardized fees, composition of accreditators, etc."

Two comments: First, a letter dated Jan. 14, 2009 asks accrediting associations "to suspend upcoming accreditation activities ... until the Coordinating Council for Accreditation (CCA) has formulated the standards and instruments for accreditation." (Slightly, accrediting associations have ignored this.) Second, the letter to me now seems to signal increasing interference in the area at bottom, but only until further orders. I say "until further orders" because the chairman immediately adds: "Such guidelines, I hope, will be recommended to the Commission by the CCA in the near future as I mentioned." What is adding fuel to the chairman's fear that the CCA not as a self-regulatory body but merely as a recommendatory body with CHEd at the chairman making the final decision.

I have difficulty with this. First, EO 705:4 itself implicitly recognizes that CHEd has no power over accrediting associations. Second, I have not seen anywhere giving to CHEd power over accrediting associations. It is a basic principle in law that public officers, whether individual or collegial, have only such powers as are given to them by law. Not even the President can declare the power of CHEd. If CHEd's power is to be increased, it has to be done by Congress.

The chairman proceeds in his letter with some observations about the performance of accrediting associations. Let me comment:

1. He says: "After 52 years of accreditation, only 8.4% of our total programs in the country are accredited."

Could it be that the fault is not in the accrediting agencies but in the educational system?

2. "Accreditation is expensive ... Some accredited demand five-star accommodations not only for themselves but for their families as well."

This is a serious accusation which accrediting agencies must address.

3. "Transparency is indeed important in the accreditation process; a more rigorous training program for accreditors is also desired.

4. It is also important that schools properly understand the criteria, goals and objectives of a program accreditation.

A practitioner reminds of the chairman says: "On the issue of control by CHEd that you raised, it is quite obvious that the situation on accreditation has deteriorated according to school heads because "CHEd in the past did not exercise nor trust on the accreditation process to rules of the game as they are embodied in the policies of the accrediting agencies."

It is unfortunate that there might be some "schoolheads" who regularly would surrender the power of control to CHEd. The thumb-over which such school heads practice must investigate such betrayal.

Finally, the chairman says: "In the future, I would be most grateful if you could contact me for information or certain matters in the jurisdiction of CHEd which is [sic] of interest to you before making [sic] any statement." I am grateful to him.

I appreciate the invitation, but, as things stand now, the matters that interest me are not my interests alone. They are of great importance especially to the entire education community.

What is urgently needed is a public hearing and airing of CHEd issues. Even the chairman's letter to me already contains rich material for public discussion. Private dialogues about matters of public concern can have the unwelcome result of betting responses issues under diminished memory or under the threat of loss of executive privileges. Hence they should not be relegated to the hard nooks of meeting but to freely private dialogues.

PS. I have received a letter from CHEd about obligatory free space limitations do not allow me to comment on it here.

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

AFP chiefs of staff through the years

ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF ANY VISIT TO THE AFP museum at Camp Aguinaldo would be the official portraits of the 39 generals who headed the Armed Forces during various stages of its history. The longest tour of duty was served by Gen. Ramon Espino, who was chief of staff from Jan. 11, 1972 to Aug. 15, 1981, a total of nine years and six months. The shortest was that of Gen. Benjamin Defensor, who served from Sept. 16, 2003 to Jan. 20, 2004, or just over two months.

REVEILLE

Ramon J. Farolan

Rival Philippine Republic

At the Tejeros Convention in March 1897, Gen. Antonio Montalan was elected captain general of the Filipino Revolutionary Army, a position which corresponds to the present office of AFP chief of staff. Bonifacio, also known by his nom-de-guerre "Supremo," is hailed as the "Father of this Philippine Army," but he is best known for his refusal to take an oath of allegiance to the United States after the Philippine-American War broke out.

Antonio Ricarte was succeeded by Gen. Antonio Luna, a brother of the noted painter Juan Luna. A graduate of Heidelberg, 1887 and the Universidad Central de Madrid, Antonio Luna was arrested on suspicion of participating in the cabinet mercenarie and exiled to Madrid.

Upon his return to the Philippines he was tapped by President Aguinaldo to head the reinstallment of the Academia Militar in Malolos and chose Guardia Civil Captain Manuel Noyar as its superintendent. Luna insisted on strict discipline over and above class loyalties which alienated many of the troops whose families were to officers from their provinces.

The Commonwealth Era (1935-1946):

Brig. Gen. Jose de los Reyes was a retired Filipino Constabulary officer who had risen through the ranks when President Manuel L. Quezon chose him to become chief of staff of the new Philippine Army. At the time of his appointment, he was head of the Intern Service of the Bureau of Customs.

After five months, Maj. Gen. Prudon Santos, Philippine Constabulary academy (PCA) Class 1914, took over as chief of staff while serving as director of the Bureau of Prisons. A Medal of Valor awarded for heroic action against Moro outlaws in Lanao del Sur, Santos would earn the honorific-sounding Chieftain of the Constabulary instead of the title.

Maj. Gen. Basilio Valdez, a decree by profession, succeeded Prudon Santos. During World War I, he joined the French Army as a medical volunteer, later transferring to the US Army and serving with the American Red Cross. Valdez would also serve as secretary of national defense and, later, secretary of public instruction in the Quezon cabinet.

While he lie hours, Santos and Valdez had good individual records, they were overshadowed by personalities like Macarthur, Eisenhower and their American staff officers who were part of a military mission to assist in the development of Philippine defense forces in light of the looming conflict with Japan.

The Third Republic:

Under President Manuel Roxas, first President of the Third Philippine Republic, Maj. Gen. Rafael Jalandoni, Class 1918, became AFP chief of staff. He would be replaced by Maj. Gen. Mariano Castaneda Sr., Class 1915, another chief of staff who had served in the Philippine Army in the line of duty. In 1947 he was seated behind President Roxas at a Plaza Miranda rally when a grenade was thrown at the stage. At great risk to his own life Castaneda kicked the grenade away, saving the President from harm. Castaneda was followed by Maj. Gen. Calixto Duque, Class 1917.

When Ramon Magsaysay defeated Elpidio Quirino in the 1953 elections, he appointed Jesse Vargas, Class 1929, as AFP chief of staff, promoting him from major general to lieutenant general (three stars). He would be succeeded by his classmate, Lt. Gen. Alfonso Arellano. Lt. Gen. Manuel Cabal, Class 1930, would head the AFP during the January 1950 firing the incendiary of President Carlos P. Garcia.

It was during the presidency of Diosdado Macapagal that an Air Force general was tapped to head the Armed Forces. Lt. Gen. Pelagio Cruz, Class of 1935, had earlier served as the first commanding general of the Philippine Air Force. After Cruz, Macapagal in another departure from previous practice chose a Navy officer, Vice Adm. Hilario Ruiz, Class 1943. Admiral Ruiz, as the AFP chief of staff, promoting him to full general, the first AFP chief to span four stars. Ruiz was succeeded by Gen. Ignacio Imperio, also a PMMA graduate. The 31st Engineering Brigade Breakfast Service in Cebu, Quezon City is named in Camp Ignacio Imperio.

During the martial law years, Gen. Ernesto Mata, Class 1937, was called back from retirement to head the Armed Forces. He later served as secretary of national defense. Gen. Victor Osias, Class 1940, another PCA officer, would succeed him, followed by a classmate, Gen. Fernando Tolentino.

Gen. Manuel Paz, Class 1941, served as head of the AFP from 1980 to 1972 and later, pointed the foreign service as ambassador to Thailand, Indonesia and the United Kingdom.

The martial law years:

Not counting the short stint of Gen. Fidel V. Ramos as acting chief of staff, there were only two AFP chiefs during the long martial law years. Gen. Romeo Espino who served the longest in this post was followed by Gen. Fabian Ver. Both Espinos and Ver belonged to the Vanguard Fraternity of the EP 80TC.

The Cory years:

After the Edsa revolt, General Ramos served as AFP chief of staff up to the end of 1988 and was succeeded by Gen. Renato de Villa, PMA Class 1957. De Villa's replacement was Maximino Jesus Rodolfo Ramas, Class 1961. Gen. Lisandro Abadia, Class 1962, took over from Ramos.

The Ramos years:

Gen. Arturo Tanlo, Class 1962, was FVR's first appointment as chief of staff. Another Air Force officer, Gen. Adolfo Aurelio Nocon, Class 1963, took over. Ramos followed by Gen. Clemente Mercado, Class 1964, of the Philippine Army.

The Estrada years:

President Joseph Estrada during his short time in office would appoint two AFP chiefs, Gen. Angelo Mariano and Gen. Angelo Reyes, both members of Class 1966.

The Arroyo years:

In the nine years of the Arroyo presidency, the AFP has had 11 chiefs of staff. Gen. Angelo Reyes was a holdover from the Estrada administration. He was succeeded by Diosdado Villanueva, Class 1968, Roy Cimatu, Class 1970, Benjamin Defensor, Class 1969, Dionisio Santiago, Class 1679, Hermogenes Esperon, Class 1971, Efren Abu, Class 1972, Alexander Yano, Class 1970, and Victor Ibrado, also Class 1970.

It is time for an AFP chief of staff to serve until a fixed term of at least three years.

I'll remember Nonie and Cecil and the red Vios

HOW DOES ONE CONSOLE THOSE WHOSE hearts and spirit have been broken by a singular event that defies even the slightest semblance of human reason and logic?

It has been 40 days of disbelief since the Nov. 23 Maguindanao massacre but we continue to be stupefied. Death by innocence. That is what I call the tragic fate of Eduardo "Nonie" and Cecil Lechoncito and their companions.

The Bible's William Gerrman in the Letters section (Inquirer, 12/28/09) evoked me for days. Rata—Katherina Ifrao Lechoncito Serrano—who is Nonie's sister, pleaded with readers not to forget the story of her aunt and uncle.

Her plea not only sounded unreasonable, as I understood the depth of grief that family and friends in each state right now. Rata herself like it was a last cause.

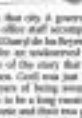
"Nobody seems to be interested in my Tito and Tita's story, or the stories of their companions in the red Vios. We don't know how we could let the whole world know about their story."

Yours is not going to be a lost cause, Rata, and I will contribute this humble piece of a small-fry writer like me to help you let the world know. Likewise, I do not wish their story to be forgotten.

During the Christmas break, media had inquiries from readers on the status of investigations and subtends on the Maguindanao Massacre. The public needed that, if only to keep the momentum of interest going, but it was mostly on the media presentities who pushed to find answers.

I agree with Rata that except for Kiri Sahroi's documentary for ABS—a feature written and presented by Jessica Soho—I should say—not much was brought to the public consciousness about the scenarios of that red Vios.

Nonie and Cecil Lechoncito were never part of the Maguindanao scenes. They just happened to be there, on the way to a hospital in Datahan City. Nonie had suffered a mild stroke two days before.



KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

He needed a CT scan in that city, a government employee, his van-load office staff accompanied him, Mercy Palabrica and Darryl de los Reyes.

If that was enough for an unanswered road ending, it is God's side of the story that completes the building pattern. Cecil was just home from Qatar after many years of being away. Her homecoming was meant to be a long vacation to spend Christmas with Nonie and their two young daughters, and was supposed to end with a happy millennium. One of the Lechoncito girls was to graduate in March.

This was the inviting part of Gabriela's television documentary film, a young filmmaker, daughter of my good friend Aida Ubalde, the renowned sculptress, had the cameras panned on the Lechoncito girls. It was misery personified. That scene, I had thought, was enough for the gods to strain the heavens with condemnation for Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. It felt had given the Maguindanao Massacre victims the face of innocence. Now to the world can you explain the abrupt and brutal orphanhood of these two young girls?

Above 20 years ago, I had traveled that long stretch of highway from Indan to Cotabato City. Except for the wide stretch of the Rio Grande de Mindanao plains, there was not much to behold. In all the towns along the way—Datu Piang, Amparatan, Magsaysay...one can really visualize poverty. Each town was simply a cluster of thatched and decrepit houses.

Just recently, in the summer of 2009, I had the opportunity to travel that highway again. Many new sights to see. It had been established into the new municipalities of Shariff Aguak, Datu Unsay, Datu Odin Sinsuat, and Buluan, among all named after Maguindanao forebears. The same poverty I had seen 20 years ago was still there. Except that—lo and behold!...the highway was suddenly punctuated by the sight of humongous mansions that were heavily guarded, each with their own private security personnel with assault rifles. "It is as if one is transported to an opulent Arabian scene," a friend who had also been there commented.

Except that all around the mansions, the little houses still spoke of grinding poverty. It was a surreal scene. This was the reign of the Ampatuan clan, their warlords. It was told, would travel in heavily armed convoys of up to 20 vehicles, mostly of SUVs and vans. At the head and tail of that convoy were pickup trucks with mounted machine guns.

I can understand the outcry for absolute power that defines an outlaw clan. I can understand that it is also fed by the anxiety of such Ampatuan enemies as Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. It is this kind, as we know now, that mutually thrives on dishonest and gruesome means to stay in power.

But I can never understand why that anxiety would translate into the wanton murder of Eduardo and their companions. Perhaps none among us will never ever be able to fathom the grief of the two Lechoncito girls. It is a grief that they will live with for the rest of their lives.

Rata Serrano writes: "We can just imagine how they pleaded for their lives. They were very violent persons and for them to die the way they did is hard to accept. All of us in this family can't find an answer."

Indeed, why? Can anyone please explain that to me without lying?

* * *

Comments to montal@ue.edu.edu.ph

Three aspects of the presidency

LISTENING TO LAST DECEMBER'S PRESIDENTial forum with Fidel Ramos, Jesse Robredo and Manuel Villar Jr. answered a series of patchy questions expertly presented by Mike Enriquez, something Dr. Jose Abueva told me kept coming back to my mind.

If we assume that the presidency is an office a model as much by the personalities and views of individuals, as it is by the rules imposed by the Constitution and tradition, then pondering the answers to the questions posed by Enriquez can help us see the potential that a winning presidential caliber representative for the candidates for the country.

Dr. Abueva points to three aspects—three presentials—of the presidency, that we should bear in mind. Several years ago, in our book on Malacañang Palace, I described it as "prize, pulpit and cage": a prize, as power is contested and fought for, symbolized by a new administration moving in; a pulpit, because of the manner in which presidents use language and symbols to articulate their goals and national ideals; and a cage, because it's where the panoply of governance plays out.

Abueva adopts a similar perspective.

First, a president, he says, can be "A Great Teacher," a role that Ramos played to perfection, and which he wields the powers of the office. A president can demonstrate leadership and not just academic management of the executive branch. There is a deep difference between the two, and the public can tell. Ramos, Abueva says, is someone who can lead, while being able to create a team that can manage things well.

Much has been made of Barack Obama's enthusiasm for the book "Team of Rivals," Doris Kearns Goodwin's account of how Abraham Lincoln united a divided cabinet composed of strong personalities with ideas not only very different from his own, but skeptical of his character and abilities, into a team that ended up loyally serving and working with the president to win the Civil War.

He did this knowing the circumstances of the job. Lincoln famously remarked, concerning the legions of politicians leveraging presidents for the

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

pork barrel and patronage, that his daily dilemma was "not many piglets, but few sows." And yet even as personnel was just for the cosmos for any political job, it didn't diminish the necessity of his substantive or the public's perception of how he viewed his office and wielded his office.

Second, a president can be a "A Great Statesman/Stateswoman," meaning the ability to set and sequencing instructions. It requires the vision and understanding required to foster and pursue the task and life in the bureaucracy so that what is the statesman's doc...services, programs...services conducive to the fulfillment of the purpose's duties to Wills in his book on the Federalist contributor Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, with John F. Kennedy. FDR, he argued, was a first leader because he used his personal charisma and eloquence to create a new political coalition and vision that transformed people's lives long after he left office. JFK, on the other hand, he criticized because he viewed the bureaucracy as the enemy to be circumvented, sidestepped and confronted. On the subject of JFK, Abueva concurs.

And finally, the president can be "A Great Transforming Leader," meaning someone who upholds and promotes the nation's positive values and high ideals of governance. A president must be moral leader, because that is precisely what is expected from someone who aspires to be the chief executive. This is a clear demonstration, he argued, of how corruption undermines the rule of law and is corrupted by those below (especially if they know the bureaucracy can be governed by a change in orientation at the top).

I've heard that the President, through the Department of the Interior, has taken to rearranging provincial police commanders, even if there's supposed to enjoy something of a fixed term; the reliable source on the ins of the 2010 polls and is being perceived as a partisan undertaking. The President enjoys the formal powers of supervision, control and, highly centralized. Everyone knows the limits that are supposed to apply in her powers, but she continues to abuse them, leave the line and continues to abuse her powers; it remains for the public to determine whether candidates have pointed out these shortcomings strength and pledged to demonstrate how deliberately they would govern differently.

Sen. Francis Escudero, for example, likes pointing out that the President of the Philippines has the power to appoint scores of thousand officials, up and down the bureaucratic line, and the public needs to be reminded that this includes hanging and consolidating them as required, under the Administrative Code. A president can in a pragmatic mode will make neither excellence nor competence or even integrity the gold standard for appointments.

In that sense, character is paramount: a president who recognizes no limits, or for whom everything is negotiable, cannot become a teacher, nation builder, or transformative leader. In that sense, the public has the responsibility to look beyond scratching for they have to be understood in terms of whether or not those accomplishments were accompanied by demonstrations of character, of integrity by the leader; and whether the leader has the ability to inspire others to emulate her subordinates and peers; and whether those accomplishments contributed to nation-building or merely personal, political or financial advantage.

LETTERS

Inquirer unfair to Bro. Eddie, volunteers

WE...ION THE INQUIRER IN ITS QUEST FOR a better country for all of us. We believe in the strengthening of our democratic institutions, for only then can we realize a strong United country.

Others may call us idealists and versatile hopeful—and indeed we are!

It is in this context that we are supporting a candidate in 2010 who is competent and able to lead us onward to a new beginning.... to a better Philippines. We know that the leaders will be difficult, but we are full of hope that we will get them.

Fully aware of the power of media in our society, we pooled our networking networks, time and resources to evolve, materialize and administer Facebook accounts and fan pages for Bro. Eddie Villanueva, the only candidate we see who has the sincerity, unstrained principle, willpower and track record to bring about holistic be a better Philippines. In all, we have six Facebook accounts and fan pages.

Thus, we were recently disappointed with the story written by Michael Lim Ubac, "Aquino leads rivals in Facebook face-off." Onscreen, 1,0/10 s We assume that one letter description of the story that DNEMS.

The story described the Facebook accounts and fan pages of all presidential candidates, except Brother Eddie's.

Brother Eddie, humble and unassuming as he is, will not take offense. However, Bonifacio Filipinos' supporters and volunteers who are not familiar with the Internet, especially Facebook, are taking the online story as an affront to the dominant issues of Bangon Pilipinas.

All his six accounts/fan pages could be easily Googled as they are for "everyone to see." Essentially, Brother Eddie's Facebook accounts and fan pages were deliberately left out in the Inquirer story. We are frustrated that a newspaper that claims balanced reporting could be so biased in this specific instance. One of the complaints was on the celebrity side being in hyperdrive in our country is that even media outlets that have gained respect for its high journalism standards fall prey to biases in the political agenda/s. We are disappointed and disheartened.

But in the end, we console each other by the fact that for as long as there are volunteers like us who believe that change can happen, there will always be hope. We don't give up. We just continue fighting for our cause.

We believe in democracy. We believe in the power of our citizenry. We believe in the collective wisdom of the Filipino people. This collective wisdom will, in the end, always express everything that weakens our democratic institutions, solely reports included.

Bangon Pilipinas!

Thank you for your tireless attention.

—ARCHIVES, FILIPINOS, volunteers, Bangon Kabuhayan Movement; author the presidents, Political Science Society, University of St. La Salle-Bacolod

Don't link Noynoy, POC chief to cycling issue

THIS IS A COMMENT ON THE EDITORIAL of the Inquirer in its issue of Jan. 4. With all due respect, your editorial has put in a bad light Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco regarding the issue on the Cadiz "tragedy that befell world cycling champion Alexander Rolo." Rolo has all...ss to participate in her favorite cycling events.

The facts as presented in your editorial as well as in the early runs preceded it were not correct. And their relevance to the candidacy of Sen. Benigno Aquino is most inappropriate and unfair.

The decision to withdraw the entry of Rolo from the competitions was not the idea of Cojuangco. It was the consensus of all the team national coaches and their coaches that constrained the POC to ask for the organizing committee to withhold Rolo's participation. It was the call of the Integrated Cycling Federation of the Philippines (ICFP), headed by Dr. Michael "Mike" Narisma, who handwrited all the arrangements and ordered of our SEA Games cyclists, including Rolo herself.

Please recall that the leadership dispute in PhilCycling will parole before the Regional Trial Court of Quezon City, and banking wishes thereon could border on prejudice. In fact, the ICFP will shortly file a complaint before the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne for the arbitrary yodeling by the International Cycling Union (UCI) of a bogus cycling leader who caused all the woes and frustrations of our cyclists in Laos. This UCI tagalog wanted the POC and the 13 member ASEAN Federations to bog no kolokoi kisses for the decisions of our cyclists in Laos.

Your article runs the loss of a gold medal or two that Rolo could have dodged in to our several rally. But what about the four regional golds that our male cyclists could have won? They could have placed as heads or were shot in the 50-kilometer race.

In the spirit of "balanced news, fearless views," I expect this comment to see print in your No. 1 paper.

—SAMUEL S. ESTEBO,
legal counsel,
Integrated Cycling Federation
of the Philippines

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Reader's Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Major cleaf Macario Asistio, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4793, 897-0794, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Why the Philippines lags behind its neighbors

TWO LETTERS TO THE ARTICLE OF ERNIE Abella titled "No quick fix to poverty, poll bets say" (Inquirer, 1/7/10, B1) have made it clear among for the presidency make outrageous claims about transforming Filipinos from poverty, but don't let today. If they can make a dent on the problem by the time they end their six-year term, if they get elected? This hand that on the statements of Jejomar Binay, secretary Cecilia Zapanta Jimenez whom she quoted as saying, "In other words, what Leonor Perez[sic] wants office, whatever is the price," she presumes, for example, aims for finishes his term, it should only be "at the bottom."

I very much agree with their statement on poverty reduction. In fact, the Medium Term Development Plan (2004-2010) of President Macapagal-Arroyo targets during the remaining poverty incidence among neighboring countries which started with the same poverty level in the 1960s. The countries are Thailand, Indonesia, 17.8 percent (2006), followed by Vietnam, 19.8 percent (2007), Thailand, 13 percent (2004); China, 8 percent (2006); and Malaysia, 5.1 percent (2004).

What makes the Philippines lag behind its peers in reducing poverty is the fact that while all these countries' economies are tied to globalization and trade liberalization, it is the Philippines which is relatively the most self-sufficient in it and has governance indicators that are the worst among the countries, in the midst of corruption and political instability to...sense of existence. Therefore, it is politics, good governance and economics (which is freedom from globalization and trade liberalization) which are interrelated and which reinforce each other that are the key factors in making possible significant poverty reduction.

In the coming elections, those who are running for President have to show more blueprints of sections in exercising good governance and telling the truth to the people and not make their alliances in order to create a strong level economic development that will achieve the specified target level of poverty reduction during the six-year term of the presidency. Then, whoever gets elected as president in a clean, honest and credible election, the Filipino people will know how much they can expect and contribute in the process.

—EDILBERTO ESTEBAS,
edesteban@yahoo.com

Raul's legacy

COMMENTARY

Belinda A. Aquino

HONOLULU—IT WAS PETE URIAT sadness that I read about the recent passing of Dr. Raul P. de Guzman, one of the most humble, gentle and kind individuals I was fortunate to have known professionally and personally.

I hope he will join Joe Isa reminiscence of his "brothers in law of Veap" who was responsible for delivering UP support to other would-revolutionary movements in the 1970s. Veap, as he was one of Veap's most influential advisers, but Raul's legacy is far more profound than that. I call a living witness to value he did for the Philippine academic community, particularly in the development of public administration as a field of intellectual inquiry and the promotion of institutions that made for responsible and responsive public decision-making. He was one of the pioneers of what was then the mere use of Public Administration (PA) at the old UP campus on Taft Ave., which eventually became the National College of Public Administration and Governance (NCPAG), now located in Diliman.

In the early 1960s when I was working with the office of the Presidential Assistant on Community Development (PACD), I decided to go back to graduate school to pursue my original interest in the humanities. I was considering the bulletin boards at the UP Extension, which was also located at Padre Faura, when someone called me from one of the PA rooms and asked if he could help me. I told him I was looking for some graduate courses in English, and he understood and, "Why don't you consider Public Administration, which has some graduate fellowships available?" Thus, he received an invaluable.

The guy turned out to be Raul de Guzman, one of the early young faculty members of the PA department, among other people, Jose V. Abueva, Antonio Sumaya and Gregorio Francisco. The three then was Carlos Fuentes. Raul mentioned that there were two fellowships available, one abroad and another, I still, and I could apply for either. I told him that I had no real background in the social sciences to qualify for, I would have a great learning curve. His ambition was to prepare himself for a career in public administration but, "Handled planning" which I asked him to explain. Before I could make up my mind, he was giving me a form to fill out, and I chose the journal option because I was working full time. I never got into the fellows almost immediately wondering what I had just done. There were times in my career life when you don't know what you are doing.

In retrospect, I made a 180-degree turn in my academic life shifting from interests in social sciences, and the civic responsibility that was Raul—to the Cinema. I became a pre-med major in by accident. It also caused a lifelong friendship with Leonor Magtolis Briones, who was given the full scholarship. "Sorry, Nene, I cannot and I would have cost up as history of PA after we were both also elected for further studies. Raul was not only good at consultations but also at fund-raising. He had a vision for the development of public administration in developing countries. He negotiated a series of visiting professors from the United States who were experts in the field to work in PA.

The other area in which he excelled was local government. The Local Government Center (LGC) flourished under his leadership. Local officials from all levels in the country were sent to LGC for further training. Raul served a vigorous advocate of decentralization and worked for legislation for fund assistance and development. In time he would become secretary-general of the Eastern Region of Organization for Public Administration (EROPA), which had periodic international conferences. Several foreign scholars would go to PA for or changed to College of Public Administration before it became the graduate school it is now.

It was during his term as dean of the college that an international project on comparative corruption in solving several countries was planned and implemented. Raul secured adequate funding from the International Development Research Centre in Canada for the project, by Professor Cynthia Enloe of the politics of gender and corruption was a universal one. The major aim of the project was to explore the uses of public power for not only responsible ends. When left unchecked, Raul felt that every region would undermine daily economic improvement.

It was somewhat of an irony then that his famous brother-in-law who was actually were becoming president of the Philippines, would be forced out of power after only two years in office due to charges of corruption and graft. That must have been very painful for Raul.

Raul's other areas a landmark work on public decision-making titled "Patterns of Decision-Making: Case Studies in Philippine Public Administration" in 1965. It analyzes how public decision-makers—legislators, executives, administrators and consumers—solve problems, and how they active in certain decisions, motivating the problem of graft and corruption would be a very elements in their successful.

If there was an "organization man," Raul was it. He was particularly adept at organizing work for faculty and staff and promoting outstanding associations everybody's work. He would ask how everybody was doing. Even in social functions in his house or in the university, he was his Ilocano-ness when born exactly where he is: people in dinners and over wholesome conversations. He was always smiling and pleasant with no sense how to live long.

He will surely be missed, but his productive and useful contributions to public administration academia and society will live on.

A former graduate student of Dr. Raul de Guzman's, Dr. Belinda A. Aquino currently serves as professor of Political Science and Asian Studies and director of the Center for Philippine Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Election gun ban starts

From page A1

across the country to implement the gun ban and enforce peaceful elections on May 10.

Replicas also banned

A Commission on Elections (Comelec) resolution prohibits the carrying and transport of firearms, explosives and deadly weapons during the 138-day election period from Jan. 10 to June 9, 2010.

The resolution defines "firearms" to include imitation firearms that are cause an ordinary person to believe that they are real.

The resolution stipulates that only members of the 1982 United Nations of the Philippines and other law enforcement agencies in proper uniform and while in actual performance of official duty are authorized to bear firearms during the election period.

Jail terms

During the election period, the Comelec is empowered to issue orders to the police and other public agencies to ensure clean and peaceful polls.

The election period doesn't end but continued with the campaign period, which starts on Feb. 9 for national candidates and March 26 for local candidates. The campaign period ends on May 9.

Supreme Court justices are tasked for violation of the gun ban would have to face criminal charges.

Under the law, a penalty of six to six years imprisonment and disqualification from holding public office await those found guilty of illegal possession of firearms during the election season, Espina said.

No excuse

"They all claimed they were not aware the gun ban had started, but it's no excuse. We have to implement the law," Senior Supt. Eric Hayon, NCRPO chief, told the reporters.

Reyes said most of those arrested were licensed to carry firearms.

"During an election gun ban, all licenses and permits to carry are considered invalid," he said. "Only Comelec could issue an exemption on a gun holder."

Private armies

Separately, Defense Secretary Norberto Gonzales yesterday announced that the AFP would start moving to dismantle private armed groups in time for the elections.

"The AFP does not need to wait for the recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Private Armed Groups before proceeding with the campaign," Gonzales said in a statement.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has limited a six-man commission to oversee the dismantling of all private armies. The move was spurred by the Nov. 23 massacre of 57 people—at least 30 of them media workers—in Maguindanao province in Mindanao, which has been blamed on the powerful Ampatuan clan.

The military and the police earlier said that they had confirmed the existence of at least 68 private armed groups, 25 of which were in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Other violators

Officials identified the other police and military personnel held for violating the gun ban as SPO4 William Tompello, who was carrying a Glock 9-mm pistol; Navy personnel Michael Bautista, in possession of a 9-mm Norinco pistol; and PO1 Alfrin Almanzar, carrying a .45 cal. Norinco pistol.

Police said others arrested in Metro Manila were lawyer Ernest John Lim, the provincial administrator of Quirino province, who was in possession of a Glock .40 cal. pistol and a Ingauer 9-mm pistol; Iman Pawn for possession of a .45 cal. Armscor pistol and Leopold Fuentebro, who yielded a 9-mm Beretta pistol.

Carlitos Tobias de Castro, Jesse Idino and Juan Carlos Magbayo were also arrested for possession of airsoft and replica pistols, according to the police. A civilian on a motorcycle, identified as Ehrgel Gaerlan, was found carrying a .45 cal. pistol, police said.

Provincial arrests

One was found carrying replica of an AK-47 assault rifle.

In Bataan, provincial jail warden Ricardo Endaucon and prison guard Jose Nestor Lucas were arrested for violating the gun ban. An unidentified civilian escort was also arrested in the province, police said.

Three people, one of whom had an arrest warrant for double, were apprehended in Batangas for violation of the Omnibus Election Code. A civilian was also taken into custody for the same offense in General Santos City.

In a statement, the NCRPO chief, Director Roberto Rosales, warned airsoft gun owners and enthusiasts to refrain from carrying their guns in public places, stressing such firearms were also covered by the gun ban.

Rosales: Respect rights

Rosales has reminded all those manning the checkpoints to be courteous and to respect the human rights of the public, including the motorists.

He also appealed to election candidates to file their applications for authority to employ security personnel with legally licensed firearms, at the Joint Security Control Center.

As of Sunday afternoon, 26 applications have been approved while 131 applications are still pending for approval.

With reports from Nikko Catillo, Nancy C. Carvajal and Inquirer Research

COASTAL SECURITY A patrol boat of the Philippine National Police Special Action Force conducts security operations off the coast of Zamboanga as the election period starts nationwide. AFP/PNP

'Colla' is Coke's new competitor

From page A1

base of the soft drink "Coca Colla."

Intended to rival its more famous US cousin, Coca Colla, the fizzy drink is at the center of a plan soon gramted from the Morales ex-cocalero of Chapare in central Bolivia submitted to the government last week to boost coca production.

Bautista proposed the name "Coca Colla" in reference to people living in the Andean part of the country.

A Ministry of Coca and Integral Development official, who requested anonymity, said the project would be launched in about four months and that the initiative could be either run by the state or a joint partnership with coca growers.

3rd largest producer

The official said the child's packaging would feature schoolchildren and red label similar to the famous Coke insignia.

The bits of Coca or Colla is of particular concern to La Paz, which wants to expand coca cultivation. Tea, flour, toothpaste and liquor are already being produced using a coca base.

Bolivia, the world's third largest producer after Colombia and Peru, yielded a coca crop of some 30,500 hectares in 2008, an increase of 6 percent over the previous year, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

Last year, Morales, who also heads the coca growers' unions in the Chapare region, vowed to increase the cultivation land to grow coca leaves by 20,000 hectares in the impoverished Andean country.

Religious rituals

Bolivian law currently approves the use of up to 12,000 hectares to grow coca in the Yungas stretch of forest in the Andes Mountains for traditional uses, such as tea, chewing and religious rituals by the Aymara ethnic group.

Coca leaves have been cultivated in the Andes mountains for 3,000 years and are part of the culture and identity of the people there, according to Morales, who has said that 66 million people in the Andes chew "sacred" coca leaves.

The International Narcotics Control Board has called for years for a ban on coca leaf chewing.

Cultural heritage

Bolivia's new Constitution, drafted by the ruling Movement Toward Socialism party, says coca is recognized as "cultural heritage, a natural and renewable resource of biodiversity in Bolivia and a factor of social cohesion" and notes that the coca leaf is not considered in its natural state.

Morales threw out US Drug Enforcement Agency agents in 2008, and the president said he would seek the help of other countries to combat drug trafficking. AFP

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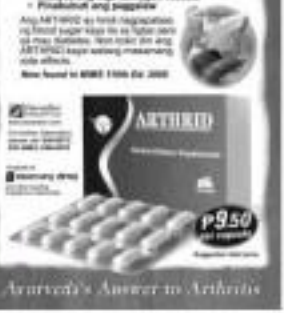

Ayurveda's Answer to Arthritis

MAYNILAD Regular Update No. 2009-11
December 17, 2009

FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER 2009

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Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Burgonia

Replacement of police chiefs slammed

By Felipa V. Collao
Inquirer Visayas

ROXAS CITY—A CITY REGIONAL TRIAL COURT (RTC) has issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) on the impending replacement of the police provincial director in Capiz, one of the provinces subjected to a police reshuffle.

Roxas RTC Executive Judge Edward B. Contreras on Friday ordered Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, Philippine National Police (PNP) Director General Jesus Versoza and other police officials to cease and desist from relieving Capiz police director Sr. Supt. Josephus Arquin and his replacement by Sr. Supt. Petrus Lumbagan or any other PNP officer.

The TRO is good for 72 hours from Jan. 8 and expected to end today.

Arquin was supposed to turn over his post to Gobingca last Saturday but the police decided instead to hold a send-off salute.

Contreras on Friday would preside over the case.

Capiz Gov. Victor A. Tanco, who filed the special civil action case to nullify the replacement of Arquin, said he was happy with the court decision but admitted it was "just a minor victory."

"Not only have but all over the country provincial police directors are being relieved and replaced by the DILG and the PNP without the governors being consulted or even informed," Tanco said.

"We have to stop this. This series of replacements ordered by the DILG and the PNP is highly irregular, especially in the current time in May to just a few weeks away," he stressed.

Chief Supt. Isagani Cuevas, Regional Police Office director, however, said that while he decided to accept Gaerlan's turnover after receiving the court order on Friday, Arquin would eventually be replaced as part of the PNP's regular reshuffle program.

Cuevas said they merely implemented the orders of the Senior Officer Replacement Board of the higher headquarters.

The Liberal Party (LP) has condemned the untimely revamp of local police chiefs without the knowledge of local executives, meaning the reshuffle was a prelude of the administration's campaign for the 2010 national elections.

In its press release on Saturday, LP Secretary-General Rep. Joseph Abaya believed that Malacañang is behind the PNP rigadoon in order the administration candidates' victory in the May 10 polls.

But Chief Supt. Leonardo Espina, PNP spokesperson, said in a text message to the Inquirer that the replacements are not nationwide. These are due to the following reasons: "The police officers have finished their two years tour of duty, they are being elevated to higher posts and to break up installations between police commanders and local officials and candidates, and demands by private armed groups to ensure an honest, orderly and peaceful elections in compliance with the Commission on Elections order to see to it that the PNP remained apolitical."

Abaya earlier revealed seven names affected by the reshuffle carried out by the PNP.

They include: Incumbent Capiz Director Sr. Supt. Arquin; Antique Director Sr. Supt. Antonio V. Corpus; ex-Dinlac from Police Regional Office 9; Sr. Supt. Rafael Santiago Jr. to Tarlac from the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO); Sr. Supt. Alberto C. Sapapo—ex-Bataan from Mimaropa; Sr. Supt. Jonathan Ferdinand G. Miano—ex-Iloilo from the PNP Department of Personnel and Records Management (DPRM); Sr. Supt. Cornelio R. Salinas—ex-Antique from Maritime Group; Sr. Supt. Pilmo B. Gollogan—ex-Capiz from Directorate for Police Community Relations; Sr. Supt. John Q. Sosito—to Northern Leyte from NCRPO; Sr. Supt. Reno D. Aspera to Davao City from ARMM; Sr. Supt. Bernardo Andres Rotoras—ex-Camarines Sur from Police Security and Protection Group (PSPG); Sr. Supt. Gilbert dela Cruz—ex-Santiago North from Police Community Relations Group; Sr. Supt. George Ramos Gudili—to Cabanatuan City from Directorate for Plans; Sr. Supt. Jesus Lorenzo Cardona—to Iloilo from Directorate for Integrated Police Operations for Southern Luzon; and Supt. Roger James R. Enriquez to Provincial Regional Office 3 from Mimaropa.

Aklanon City Mayor Florencio Bragazas had earlier revealed that the government has replaced Aklanon City police Chief Supt. Lloyd Sumiwal Mercurio with Supt. Gerardo Rosa without the Department of Interior and Local government sending him an official notice.

Cartier Gil Javier "Bayag" Mallari had also obtained a TRO from the Cartier RTC against the transfer of Sr. Supt. Alfred S. Corpuz, director of the Cartier Provincial Police Office to another assignment.

"Under local government laws, local executives should first be given a shortlist of the possible replacements before the PNP changes its local guard. This has been disregarded," Mallari stressed. With a report from Jocelyn R. Uy in Manila

AFP, NPA claim victory over each other in anti-insurgency drive

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE MILITARY CLAIMED it has succeeded in reducing Communist rebel forces in Eastern Visayas.

Lt. Col. Armand Rico, information officer of the 8th Infantry Division based in Catbalogan City, said their anti-insurgency campaign last year resulted in substantial gains.

What used to be 14 guerrilla fronts of the New People's Army (NPA) in the region are now closer to two, both of which are based in Northern Samar, he said.

Government troops initiated at least 79 anti-insurgency operations that led to the capture of 26 suspected rebels, of which 12 were killed in encounters, he added.

Their operations also resulted in the surrender of 150 NPA members and the recovery of 145 unarmed firearms, Rico added.

The military operations last year also led to the discovery and dismantling of 26 rebel camps, according to Rico.

He said 146 villages in Samar provinces were also "freed" from the influence of the rebels in 2009.

Success

"We can say that our anti-insurgency campaign was a success," Rico said.

The military official said that their campaign against the insurgents will continue to be relentless this year until the Armed Forces of the Philippines achieves its goal of anti-insurgency in the region.

The campaign would not only involve military operations but also the delivery of basic services and projects to the people living in remote villages, he said.

The Army, through its engineering battalions, are engaged in various projects like the construction of farm-to-market roads, water system, health centers, school buildings and even electrification under its "Kalinaw sa Barangay Project."

"We will enhance our territorial defense system and our community works as part of our campaign against the rebels here in the region," Rico said.

Over a hundred villages in the region, mostly in the Samar provinces, benefited from the military's electrification project, he said.

Rebel-turned-rebel Lt. Santiago Salda, spokesperson of the National Democratic Front in Eastern Visayas, however, also claimed "victory" against government soldiers last year.

In an e-mailed statement Saturday, Salda said that of the 63 "tactical offensives" that the NPA carried out last year, their group was able to confiscate 40 firearms from soldiers and inflicted 90 casualties.

"We aim to carry out more annihilative guerrilla offensives to accumulate more firearms and strengthen our forces while weakening the enemy of the people," Salda said.

Bicol

In Naga City, the military said it had cut down the number of NPA rebels in Bicol by at least a hundred.

From 520 fighters, the number in Bicol were down to 400, according to a report furnished the Inquirer.

The report said 29 NPA cadres were killed in firefights last year, 32 rebels were captured and 59 surrendered.

It said the army lost five soldiers and 13 militiamen in the 332 firefights between government forces and NPA rebels in 2009, adding that 52 soldiers were reported wounded.

The number of rebel firearms was also reduced, said Maj. Harold Cabreros, the Army unit's spokesperson.

"As of today, the 9IDPC has 302 unserviced firearms as compared to its 448 tally in 2008," Cabreros added.

He said they recovered 47 high-powered firearms and 79 low-powered firearms from the NPA in 2009, although they also lost 13 high-powered firearms in the attack.

With a report from Jonas Cabiles Soriao, Inquirer Southern Luzon

1,800 cops to secure Sinulog fest in Cebu

By Chito D. Aragon
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE CEBU POLICE have heightened security alert in Metro Cebu to ensure a peaceful celebration of the Sinulog Festival that kicked off Sunday.

Robbers and thieves from other parts of the country have started arriving here to take advantage of the huge crowds of devotees and tourists expected to Cebu City for the week-long festivity, police said.

Senior Supt. Reynaldo Castañeda Jr., chief of Cebu City Police Office (CCPO), said 1,800 policemen from CCPO and other units in Cebu, including military personnel from the Cebu-based Central Command (Centcom) and civilian volunteers, will secure the seven-day cultural and religious activities will be held to celebrate Sinulog on Jan. 16 and 17 in Honor of Cebu's patron saint, the Señor Sto. Niño.

Maj. Wilmer Peria, Centcom spokesperson, said they would deploy around 300 soldiers, 4,000 student cadets and 1,000 reservists to handle crowd control during the festival that will culminate with a street dance parade.

The Cebu Provincial Police also conducted checkpoints in the provinces.

The police have so far arrested one of four pickpocket suspects from Bacolod who tried to victimize an American couple.

His three companions eluded arrest when police smoked them out of room in a downtown pension house in the early hours of Saturday.

THE KICKOFF to the Sinulog festival is the Sinulog sa Kabataan sa Lalawigan where the North City Central School Weed Talents District won third place in the elementary division.

CONGRATULATIONS

Ganador Rice of Oliver Enterprises

receives Honorable Mention

at the First International World's Best Rice Contest 2009

held at The Rice Trader World Rice Conference

in Shangri-La Mactan Resort & Spa

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Chef Comments:

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Greetings from:
Bryan Warrington Dito

CHEF JONATHAN JUSTUS
Chef/Owner, Justus Restaurant
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PNR commuter train in Bicol in need of more passengers

NAGA CITY—AFTER THREE MONTHS since the resumption of its first run in three years, the Philippine National Railway (PNR) is running again in the Bicol Commuter Train (BCT) that started Dec. 16 last year even if it's a losing operation.

Constancio Teñoloso, division manager of the transportation department-Bicol, admitted on Sunday that the income was "not of encouraging" with the expenses of the operation.

The consolidated record of the commuter train operation for 16 days from Dec. 16 to Dec. 31, 2009 shows that ticket expenses alone reached P214,000, while the income derived from operation only totaled P43,449.

Teñoloso said if the salaries of 17 employees in the department and 19 employees in the mechanical department were factored in, there is no doubt the operation is losing.

"Our objective here is to provide public service as we raise the awareness of the people that the commuter train is now running especially to serve Bicol passengers," Teñoloso told the Inquirer in an interview.

But he was hoping the income would improve once the people are aware of the regular run of the BCT, citing the trend in the number of passengers patronizing it during the holidays.

Teñoloso said passengers packed the three-car 208-seat capacity BCT during the holidays from Sipocot town in Naga City in Camarines Sur and Naga City in Ligao City in Albay.

For the first 16 days of operation, the BCT passengers reached 4,124, while the cumulative sitting capacity was 2,560 passengers, which means that 1,794 passengers or more were the ones who packed the trains during the holidays.

Teñoloso revealed that the average daily passengers on the Naga-Sipocot route were only 20 passengers. Sipocot-Ligao had the highest average of 127 passengers; Ligao-Libmanan came second highest with 69 passengers; and Libmanan-Naga with 28 passengers.

He said the BCT needs more promotions and new cars to be competitive.

The PNR train running from Bicol-Manila and vice-versa had been suspended on Sept. 28, 2006 and it was reopened on Sept. 16, 2009 with a trial run from Sigbuhan, Quezon to Naga City in time for the 8th Peñafrancia fiesta. Jean Escander Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

More Sports stories on Page A27 to A30

Late SPORTS
Editor Teddyvic S. Makeshino
Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ochoa

Purefoods downs Rain or Shine

By Mayong R. Castillo

KG CANLUZON GAME-OFF THE BENCH to shoot 14 points and propel Purefoods to a 103-88 victory over Rain or Shine last night in the 8JPC 10th Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

Jason Yap scored 22 points and Kenby Raymundo added 22 as Purefoods improved to 10-6 and stayed in the hunt for an automatic Final Four slot.

"We are long in there to life, our will was there to pursue it," coach Ryan Gregorio said of his team's chances of joining San Miguel in the semifinals.

"We really didn't want to lose the opportunity to have a crack at the semifinals [outright]," Gregorio added. "But, even at this point, the automatic quarterfinal (seat) is something worth working for."

Canaleta's heroics came when the Giants almost blew a 19-point lead against a team that played with practically nothing to lose. The Painters threatened late at 87-82 before sputtering for good.

Rain or Shine, which got a career-high 29 points from Ildefonso Ildefonso, fell to its 12th defeat in 16 games.

Norwood, last season's top rookie, scored 23 of his total in the first two quarters but got very little help there as the Giants enjoyed to a 57-35 lead at half-time.

Roger Yap chipped in 14 points for the Giants, who have Alaska and Sta. Lucia as their last elimination round foes.

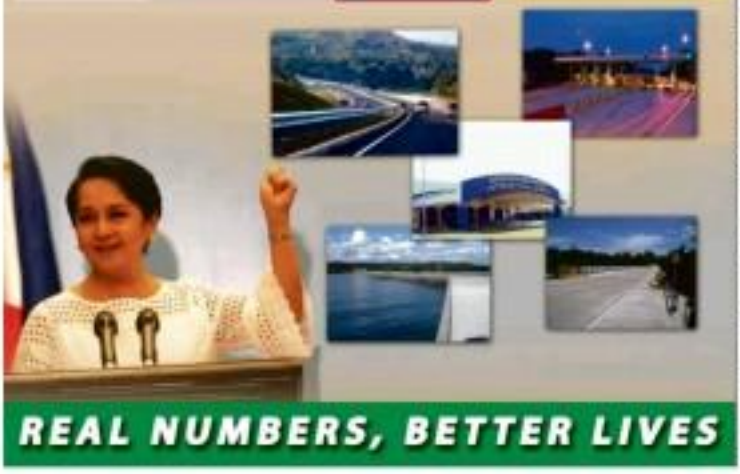
"We face Alaska in our next game, then Sta. Lucia, two teams eying for baby positions for the playoffs," Gregorio said. "I mentioned to my players that playoff mentality starts today."

Solomon Mercado finished with 20 points and eight assists for Rain or Shine, which could land in a 9-0 game with Barangay Ginebra in the solid cast phase.

Barako Bull shocked Talk 'N Text in the second game, 99-97, virtually downing the Tropang Texters chances of an automatic semifinal berth.

Ganito Tayo
NOON Ganito Tayo
NGAYON
INFRASTRUCTURE

	GANITO TAYO NOON Dec.31,2000	GANITO TAYO NGAYON Dec.31,2009	BETTER LIVES
Farm to market roads	3,044 kms. built in 1998-2000	17,517 kms built in 2001-2009	• More efficient transport of produce • Lower market prices of produce • More income for farmers
Roads	34,327 kms. of roads built in the past three administrations before PGMA	47,773 kms. of roads in 2001-2009	• More roads and bridges were built in President Arroyo's term than in the past three administrations • Promoted domestic and foreign tourism • Reduced cost of travel • Stimulated investments and trade
Bridges	274,747 lineal meters built in the past three administrations before PGMA	289,944 lineal meters of national bridges	
RORO ports	Data not available	32 new RORO ports	• Connected the archipelago • Lowered the cost of transporting goods • Promoted tourism
Airports	Data not available	4 new airports 22 improved	• More jobs • Promoted tourism • More flights, bigger planes, cheaper fares



REAL NUMBERS, BETTER LIVES

PGMA infra projects leading the way towards development

The country is a group of unconnected islands in 2001, but with the construction of more roads and bridges, and roll-on-roll-off (RoRo) ports, transportation and tourism has never been easier.

Now, the islands are interconnected by the so-called nautical highway with 32 roll-on-roll-off ports, making it easier for travelers to hop from one island to the next.

As of 2009, there were 47, 773 kilometers of national roads as compared in year 2000 with only 7, 847 kilometers; and 289, 944 kilometers of bridges in 2009 as compared to 88, 794 in 2000.

Travel to northern Luzon has become faster with the completion of the 94-kilometer Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEX). It takes travel time from Manila to Tarlac to one hour and 25 minutes and from Clark to Tarlac to a mere 25 minutes.

Meanwhile, the newly completed Southern Tagalog Arterial Road (STAR) Tollway cuts travel time from Sto. Tomas, Batangas, to Batangas City by 90 to 120 minutes.

In the Visayas, the P2.2-billion Bohol Circumferential Road completed in 2006 reduces travel time by half, from eight to four hours.

The construction of the Haleyma Highway and Bontoh-Talubi-Tagbawan Road will be completed to make up the North Luzon Agricultural Quadrangle.

Other government projects are the refurbishment of the Subic Bay Port, the Batangas Port, Jagna Port, Ubay Port, And Tagbilaran Port, all in Bohol, and Lucena Port.

The government has already began the construction of new airports and improvement of old ones.

Those up for improvement are the Dinadiawi Macapagal International Airport in Pampanga and the Puerto Princ International Airport in La Union. Meanwhile, two new airports of international standard were opened: the New Bacolod-Silay Airport and the Iloilo Airport which replaced the old airport in Iloilo City.

Other airports expected to be opened this year are the Bagabag Airport is expected by the end of the year and the Basco and Itbayat airports in Batanes, and Casiguran Airport in Aurora.

A new airport is also being constructed– the Laguindingan Airport Development Project in Misamis Occidental.

Farm-to-market roads' infrastructure development such as farm-to-market roads spurs economic growth by providing easier access to markets, thereby alleviating poverty in the rural areas and isolated regions.

The goal of FMR infrastructure is to ensure farmers' access to basic social and market facilities thus helping them produce more crops and earn more money.

With only 258 kilometers of FMRs in 2000, it ballooned to 17,000 kilometers in 2009.

"Kami dito sa bonnipay ay nagpapasalamat kay Pangulong Gloria sa proyektong ito dahil kung noon mahirap dalhan ang huge na ito, ngayon mas madalis at mabilis nang i-deploy ang mga produkto (at na ang tobacco), mas at gumo, asya ang kanilang kita," said Mayor Cipriano of Dao in Lagunding, Misamis Oriental. (PNA)

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DID YOU KNOW

THE FIRST JEEPS IN THE Philippines arrived in 1941 on the same ship carrying the first bishop of Manila, Fray Domingo de Salazar. The first areas of assignment were Santa Cruz, Solana and San Miguel in Manila. (Joel L. Escalante, Inquirer Research)

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PARAÑAQUE SHOOTOUT

Hurting widow seeks justice for slain kin

By Nikko Dizon

LILIAN DE VERA IS HOPING and praying for one thing: A decision that will help her get justice for her slain husband and young daughter.

This morning, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) is expected to release its findings on the Dec. 5, 2008 bloody shootout between policemen and suspected militants in Parañaque City after conducting several public hearings last year.

De Vera's husband, Alfonso, and their 7-year-old daughter, Lea Alyanna, were among the six civilians killed in the shootout incident.

"I am hoping it will help us get justice," De Vera told the Inquirer on the phone.

Due to its lack of prosecutorial powers, the CHR can only recommend to the Department of Justice (DOJ) or government agencies the filing of criminal or administrative charges against people found to have committed human rights violations.

De Vera said she was also waiting for the DOJ resolution on the case.

She said the fact was that every day has been a struggle for her to move on.

"I pray morning and night that I will be able to get through the day. It still hurts," De Vera said.

She has been staying with her older sister in Pangasinan since the tragedy. "She didn't want me to be living alone. Besides, it's also [as] the cues of so many times our parents had already passed away," De Vera said.

To keep herself busy, she goes to church every day and does some cross-stitching.

"I am trying to move on but because of the cases, it's also difficult," she said.

De Vera attended all the public hearings conducted by the CHR last year, as well as the cases conducted by the DOJ.

On the night of Dec. 5, the Philippine National Police's Special Action Force and Highway Patrol Group were on a stakeout at the United Bonanyan Subdivision 4 in Barangay (Village) Moonlit Green, following a tip that members of the Waray-Waray and Olanian gangs were about to rob a warehouse in the area.

Alfonso and Lea Alyanna were on their way to pick up De Vera when their vehicle was riddled with bullets allegedly by policemen who thought that their Isuzu Crosswind was one of the robbers' vehicles.

The operation left a policeman, 10 suspected robbers and six civilians dead. A retiring police officer, Supt. Florento Dubrocco Jr., was seriously injured.

Tanod shot dead by wife who kills self

By Nancy C. Carvajal

A COUPLE WERE FOUND DEAD INSIDE their house in Quezon City yesterday morning, with the police saying the woman probably killed her husband and then took her life.

SPO2 Jessy Abad of the Quezon City Police District's Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit identified the victims as Maximo Astillero and his wife, Merlinda. Both were 47 years old.

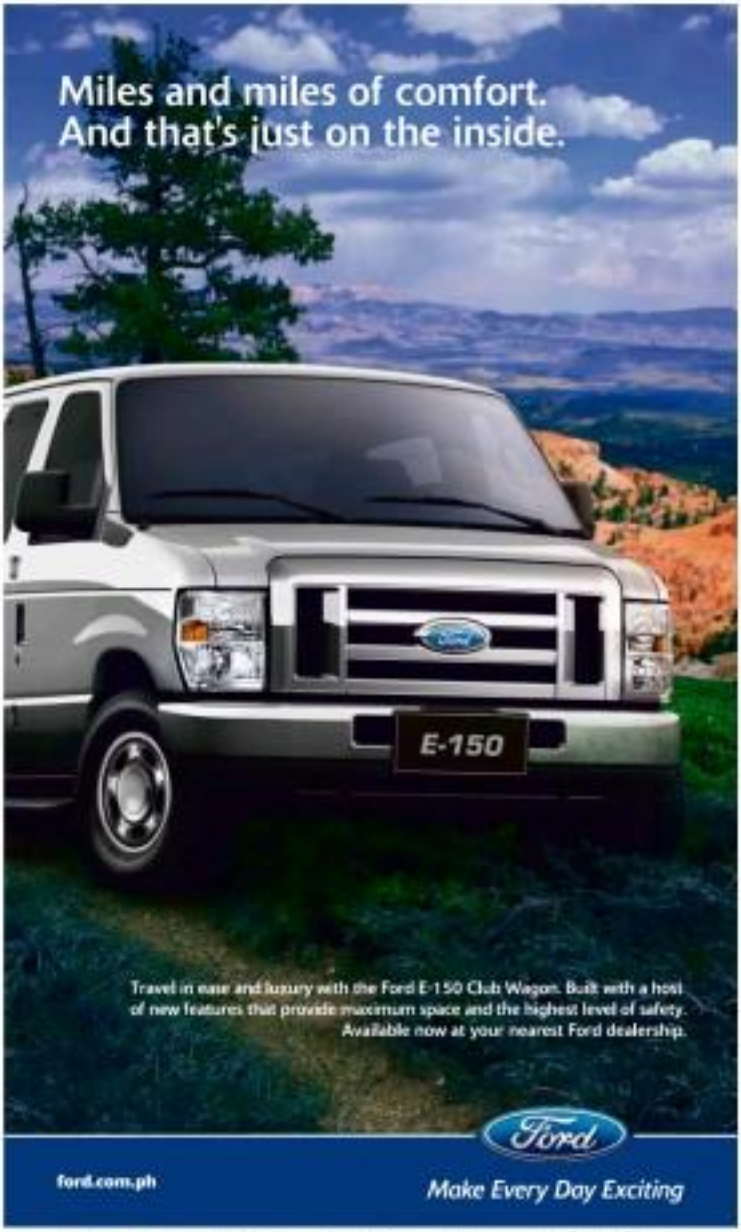
Astillero was a barangay tanod (watchman) while Merlinda, who worked in Canada, was in the country on vacation.

The police said the bodies were discovered by the couple's 14-year-old daughter in their house on Bayanihan Street, Barangay Commonwealth, at around 6 a.m. yesterday.

Astillero was found sprawled on the bed in the master bedroom with a gunshot wound in the head. Beside him was his wife's pillow and underneath it was his .38 cal. revolver.

Merlinda, on the other hand, was found in the living room with a knife beside her. Her wrists had been slashed.

Abad said that based on their initial investigation, Merlinda probably shot her husband and then killed herself due to rumors that Astillero was having an affair.



Citizen's call

Speeding smoke belcher

Please check this passenger jeepney with Plate No. PXN 371 which rides Project 8. It does not only speed, it is also a smoke belcher. *Jun. 07, Quezon City*

Go after drug users, criminals in Mandaluyong

Paging Mayor Abalos, pati ba mga user ang mga tyinesa-investigate ng mga drug addicts, pushers and criminals in Barangay Addition Hills or F. Ortigas Street, Investing P. Aquino Compound 20-ish. *Mauve, 44, Mandaluyong City*

Students turn street into parking lot

Why does Manila City Hall allow Leon Guinto Street fronting De La Salle University-Manila and the Catholic Church to be turned by DLSU-CSB students into a veritable parking lot? *Ronald, 46, Pandacan City*

Nonworking underpass escalators in Makati

This spoiled my day. I took my elderly teenage friend to Ayala Avenue via Subway during one of the Christmas holidays to attend a Mall. Why won't all the underpass escalators not working? I was so ashamed. Please take action, Mayor Binay. *Jennifer A. Apolinario, 32, Makati*

Young girls robbing passersby in Recto

Grabe na mga kabataan at mandurukot at lo-sa kanto ng Morayta at Recto. Pang-mga manduronkot mga batang bata! (There are so many hoodlug-ness and thieves at the corner of Morayta and Recto. The thieves are young girls). *Randy Reyes, 38, Manila*

BRIGHT DEADLY DISTRACTION A. Torres, 38, of Makati City writes: "The LCD billboard beside The Professional Towers [on Ortigas Avenue] flicks, now flashlights, Makati's deadliest intersection at dawn and, it's too bright, drivers and commuters find it hard to see where they're going at night."

Car thieves strike in broad daylight

"Baker Killer" gang of Expat at Subway Town Center Management needs to beef up security in their parking lots especially behind Outback Restaurant. The gang is getting daring, smiling evens in broad daylight. They broke into a friend's car by smashing the window (where the driver's seat). They took everything including the valuables. *Edmund Escobar, 37, Muntinlupa*

Traffic light needs fixing

The traffic light at the corner of Katipunan and Aurora Boulevard has not been working for a few months. It has been causing many traffic in the area. *Esperanza Rosario, 45, Marikina*

Quick response from Maynilad

This is in response to the Jan. 4 report about the water leak on Del Monte Avenue in front of Caltex gas station in Mandaluyong. Governor Dy: We are pleased to inform the public that our contractor repaired the leak on the same day. As always, we thank you for bringing these matters to our attention. We welcome the public's assistance in our efforts to drastically reduce water loss in the west zone. *Geraldine C. Guzman, Maynilad Corporate Affairs and Public Relations head*

Incomplete road project

Calling Maynilad, your contractors undertake street diggings in and around Bangkal, Makati City, for pipe-laying projects but fail to restore the road to their previous or mended condition. They just cover the diggings with sand, and most of the time these projects take ages and the health of residents, particularly the children. *Bonnie Tiongco, 30, Bangkal, Makati*

Suspended mayor to take back post

By DJ Yap

SUSPENDED RODRIGUEZ MAYOR PEDRO Cuenyo said he would again try to reclaim his seat in the town hall today on the strength of a Commission on Elections (Comelec) resolution prohibiting the suspension of elected officials within the campaign period.

Cuenyo cited Comelec Resolution 8727 dated Dec. 29, 2009, which enforces the ban on the suspension of "any elective provincial, city, municipal or barangay official, unless the suspension will be for purposes of applying the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act."

Based on his understanding of that directive, Cuenyo said he should not have been slapped with a two-month preventive suspension in the first place, considering that the suspension would fall within the election period, which started on Jan. 10.

He noted that the resolution does not specify if it covers currently suspended elected officials, or whether the prohibition only applies to suspensions implemented within the campaign period.

Cuenyo, meanwhile, urged the Comelec to clarify the rule, although he said he does not want to make any official inquiries such the poll body as it might be considered meddling his right to reinstatement.

On Dec. 22, the provincial board suspended Cuenyo anew after his previous suspension had lapsed.

He was charged with usurpation of authority filed by the acting mayor, Vice Mayor Jesus Cruz, who accused Cuenyo of not heeding a previous two-month suspension order imposed on him by the Sandiganbayan earlier this year involving a graft case filed by several town residents over the demolition of houses on a property in Barangay Burgos in 2002.

The mayor had refused to acknowledge the suspension order and kept reporting to work from March to May, insisting that the order was not yet final and executory since his appeals were still pending before the court.

The previous suspension order, which lapsed on Dec. 22, was issued by the Rizal provincial board in October and stemmed from an administrative case filed last year against Cuenyo over the construction of the Hope Rehabilitation and Central Transport Terminal Project in Barangay San Rafael.

The complainants alleged that the project resulted in the death of a bulldozer operator and health ailments acquired by several children in the area.

FIREFIGHTERS battle a fire which broke out in a two-story commercial building on Sucat Road, Parañaque City yesterday morning.

MMDA employees to get new houses

By Nitz Calleja

EVEN RETIREE EMPLOYEES OF the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) may benefit from the agency's housing project for its 6,000 employees.

MMDA Chair Oscar Inocentes recently made the announcement during his inspection of the project site—a 65-hectare lot located at Sitio Pulgasan-ng Manuela in Carmona, Cavite.

"If the space and our resources will permit it, retired employees of the agency who are qualified can also avail (themselves) of the housing project. It is our way of showing our gratitude and appreciation for the services they have rendered," Inocentes said in a statement over the weekend.

The proposed site was used as a sanitary landfill in the 1990s. The MMDA chair, however, said that only 17 hectares of the property would be utilized for the project.

Inocentes cited initial studies conducted by the MMDA planning division which presented several options on the number of housing units and lot sizes.

The first option called for the construction of 1,150 single-detached houses with a floor area of 36sq m each. Another option was to build 1,300 units with a floor area of 40 sq m.

Inocentes, however, ordered the planning division to come up with other proposals, saying he would like as many employees to be accommodated as possible.

2 teenagers dead, fireman injured in Parañaque fire

By Nitz Calleja

TWO TEENAGERS WERE KILLED IN A fire that gutted a two-story commercial building in Merville Subdivision, Barangay Sucat, Parañaque City early yesterday morning.

Senior Fire Officer 3 Jesus Reyner Jr., Parañaque arson investigator, said the bodies of Jhon Bello, 19, and Reiven Khaleng, 18, were found burned beyond recognition after they were both trapped inside the building on Sucat Road, San Isidro Village.

The victims worked for South City Food Supply, one of the six establishments occupying the building owned by Rustan Corp.

"They were sleeping in the room when the fire started. They were probably locked inside," Reyner told the reporters.

The fire alarm was raised by BFC Grocery at around 3 a.m. and reached the second alarm before firefighters managed to put it out at 5:40 a.m.

But before that, it spread quickly to other parts of the building, damaging at least P3 million worth of property, Reyner said.

While firefighters were struggling to put out the blaze, a volunteer identified as Robert Pabula was injured after he fell off a fire truck.

The cause of the fire was still under investigation, Reyner said.

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Suspect's mom offers help

THE mother of road rage suspect Jason Aguilar Lee yesterday said she wanted to help the namesake of her son who was deported from Dubai after author Ces picked him up and jailed him for several days on the suspicion that he was the one involved in the killing of the son of a Malaysian ex-official. "I am willing to help him pay the placement fee so he could go back to his work abroad," Marlene Aguilar told the reporters over the phone. She said she wanted to help the overseas Filipino worker. Jason Aguilar, a welder working in Dubai before his deportation, because "he is innocent and I'm sorry he was dragged into this mess." She added that her son—who has not been seen since Nov. 28, the day he reportedly shot dead Rufie Pineda Elardo Jr. over a traffic altercation—has not communicated with her since he sent her an e-mail saying he was already in Kuwait. *Mary C. Calvario*

Teen, neighbor killed in Manila

A TEENAGER and his 20-year-old neighbor were killed yesterday in a shooting incident in Malate, Manila, police said. Ariel Ocampo, 19, a resident of Gate 60 Area 4 in Binondo and his neighbor, Mark Capadal, 20, died on the spot after a still unidentified man accosted them down with a shotgun. SPO2 Edmundo Cabal of the Manila Police District homicide section said the shooting incident happened at around 2:30 a.m. yesterday on a covered court at Gate 29 Pedregosa Area 1, Barangay 20 Zone 2, Pandia Compound in Dandy. Cabal said that six Mr. Barangay 20 Zone 2 councilors Nasario Bontong and Julian Salado heard gunshots coming from the covered court. When they went outside to check, they found Calvo and Capadal with multiple gunshot wounds all over their bodies. *Jeannette I. Andrade*

More Cory streamers put up

THE Manila City government has put up new streamers bearing the likenesses of President Corazon "Cory" Aquino and that of her husband, former Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr., on major thoroughfares to replace those destroyed by typhoon. Mayor Alfredo Lim told the reporters that the streamers had been put up for the commemoration of Cory's birth anniversary on Jan. 25. On the same day, a monument in honor of the former president, who died last year due to colon cancer, will also be unveiled. "I ordered the putting up of streamers to remind people of her birthday. The Aquino couple are heroes to the country after all," Lim said. Some 100 streamers have been placed on center islands and sidewalks on the stretch of Roxas Boulevard from Vito Cruz to P. Burgos Streets and from P. Burgos Street to Lawaang Bonifacio. The mayor added that more streamers and banners would be displayed on the stretch of España Boulevard from Mehan Gardens in Ermita as well as from Sta. Mesa to the boundary of Quezon City and Manila. Lim said the height of the celebration would be the unveiling of a monument of the late president beside the statue of her husband at the corner of Roxas Boulevard and P. Burgos Street, in a goal "to let the inauguration of the three-story President Corazon C. Aquino high school at the Bonifacio compound be commenced on either generation or after some other President figures it was would know her legacy." *Jeannette I. Andrade*

Disgraced wife of N. Ireland leader to resign

BELFAST—THE DISGRACED politician wife of Northern Ireland's First Minister Peter Robinson has been dumped by her party, sources said Saturday, as her husband faced calls to resign.

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) has announced the membership of Iris Robinson, 50, over her illicit financial dealings with a teenage lover.

She will resume her seats in the British parliament and in the Northern Ireland Assembly next week, DUP officials told the BBC and the Press Association news agency.

A party source said: "The next few days are absolutely critical for the party. We wanted to show people we were acting decisively.

"There was no question about it, she had to go and go now. There was absolutely no sympathy for the position she found herself in." Iris Robinson had already announced she was quitting politics because of severe depression.

She and her husband have become embroiled in a crisis after it emerged that she had secured 50,000 pounds (56,400 euros, 80,000 dollars) from two wealthy developers to help her clear 19-year-old lover set up a restaurant in Belfast.

Peter Robinson has insisted he knew nothing of his wife's financial dealings and has vowed to clear his name, but he is facing growing calls to resign or consider his future amid deep disquiet within the DUP.

It is alleged he failed to alert the authorities that his wife did not declare her monetary interest in her lover's business, even though she was a member of the group of which gave him the go-ahead to open it in 2008.

The Free Presbyterian church, which is closely linked to the Protestant DUP, offered Peter Robinson little comfort when a senior minister urged him to step down as first minister.

KIRK McCambley at 19 (top photo) and Northern Ireland First Minister Peter Robinson with wife Iris. AFP

"I do believe that his position is becoming increasingly untenable," said Rev. David McIlveen.

Parliament that we make in private will undoubtedly influence our judgements in public," McIlveen said.

The scandal comes as tensions run high between the pro-British DUP and its partners in the power-sharing government in Belfast, Sinn Fein, who want a united Ireland.

Protestant conservatives Unionists the DUP and Catholic socialist Republicans Sinn Fein have shared power since 2007, but concern over a return to violence was fuelled by the death of two British soldiers and a policeman in attacks by dissident Republicans last year.

Fresh fears of violence were raised on Friday when a Catholic police officer was seriously injured after a bomb exploded under his car as he was driving to work. He remains in a critical condition. AFP

Icy Europe: Hundreds of flights canceled

BERLIN—A FLAME ELD OFF an icy runway and powerful winds and heavy snow forced hundreds of flight cancellations across Europe on Saturday as Masses of freezing cold fouled transportation.

An SO Berlin plane slid off the runway in Nuremberg, Germany and got stuck in the snow late Friday. Nobody was injured, but the airport was closed for more than two hours.

More than 300 car accidents were reported on icy streets in the southwestern state of Baden-Württemberg, with more than 40 people injured. The western state of North Rhine-Westphalia reported 100 accidents.

At the German-French border near Freiburg, hundreds of trucks were stuck for hours when French authorities closed the highway because of heavy snow. The Red Cross handed out blankets and hot soup to the drivers.

By early afternoon, 106 domestic and international flights had been canceled at Frankfurt airport as a low pressure system from the Mediterranean brought gusty winds and several centimeters of snow. Crews struggled to clear the runways, and the few planes that managed to take off had to be de-iced first, said Frankfurt airport duty manager Heinz Otto.

In Britain, cold winds swept in from the north, sending temperatures tumbling as -14°C (7°F) in parts of Scotland and northern England. The country is in the midst of its longest cold snap in three decades, and passenger has been disrupted in many areas.

The arctic weather—unusual for Russia's temperate southern—led to record demand for gas. In a weekend Saturday, Prime Minister Gaidar Rzewin reassured Britons that gas supplies were not running out, even though almost 100 businesses had been asked to stop using gas to conserve supplies. Supplies of salt and sand for gritting dangerously icy roads were also running low.

Heavy snow forced the cancellation of 168 flights at Dublin Airport in Ireland. Traffic at London's Heathrow Airport, Europe's busiest, was also affected, with British Airways alone cancelling around 50 flights.

In France, dozens of flights were canceled in Toulouse, Lyon and Brest. Heavy snow snapped power lines in the southeast, near the Mediterranean, leaving at least 7,000 homes without power.

In Sweden, overnight temperatures dropped as low as -31°F (-35°C) inland. Linköping, a university town 200 kilometers southwest of Stockholm, recorded its lowest temperature since 1979, hitting -16°F. AP

In video, bomber says attack on CIA avenged killing of Taliban leader

VIDEO shows Humam Khalil Abu-Mulal al-Balawi, right, next to the new leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Hakimullah Mehsud.

KHOST, Afghanistan—Humam Khalil Abu Mulal al-Balawi, the Jordanian suicide bomber who killed eight people at a CIA outpost in Afghanistan last month, was shown in a video broadcast on Saturday saying that the attack was carried out in revenge for the 2009 killing of the Pakistani Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud.

Balawi, wearing green camouflage fatigues and carrying a weapon in his lap, appeared in a video on Al-Jazeera satellite television denouncing his "enemies," Jordan and America. Balawi's father, Khalil, confirmed that the man in the video was his son.

"This is a letter to the enemies of the enemies," Balawi said in the video, referring to the Islamic nation, or ummah. "To the Jordanian intelligence and the American [Central Intelligence Agency]."

He was shown sitting beside another man identified as Hakimullah Mehsud, the aggressive young militant who leads the strike of the Pakistani Taliban after Baitullah Mehsud's death. The image supports Taliban claims that Balawi had, at least, support among the most senior militants in the country.

Balawi, a doctor who worked in a Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan, blew himself up on Dec. 30 at a CIA base in Khost, in eastern Afghanistan. US officials have described him as a double agent who was taken into the base in Afghanistan because the CIA hoped he might be able to deliver top members of al-Qaeda's network.

The video was the latest glimpse into the last days of a man that intelligence officials increasingly believe had worked in a relationship—and gotten very far—at least a year to strike a major blow against US intelligence operations in the region.

Shortly after the video appeared, Balawi's father in the Jordanian capital, Amman, confirmed that it showed his son.

"My heart is tearing apart. Who is the one who destroyed the one that I brought up?" he said in a humbly critical tone. "Who is the one who turned him from a human doctor to someone who carries out such a thing?"

One theme that has been consistent in the family's comments since Balawi's identity emerged was that he became a changed man after he was arrested a year ago by the Jordanian authorities during the Israeli offensive on Gaza, and was questioned over his jihadi-website writings. NYT

The WORLD

Cito Lorenzo B. Gasco

Convent, 5th church firebombed in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR—ASSAILANTS in Malaysia struck at a convent school and a fifth church on Sunday amid rising tensions between majority Muslims and Christians over the use of the word "Allah" to describe the Christian God.

Police in the steep city of Taiping, around 300 kilometers from the capital Kuala Lumpur, said a petrol bomb had been thrown at the guardhouse of a Catholic convent school but failed to go off.

Police also said they had found several broken bottles including palm thinners outside one of the country's oldest Anglican churches, All Saints, Taiping, and said one of the building's walls had been blackened.

The unprecedented attacks risk dividing the nation of 28 million people that has significant religious minorities, and could also complicate Prime Minister Najib Razak's plan to win back support from the non-Muslims before elections due by 2013.

The issue could pose a longer-term risk of political instability for Malaysia, which has been courting Indonesia and Thailand for foreign investment and where investors have been frightened off by the prospect of an end to the predictable rule of the coalition that has governed for 52 years.

The row, over a court ruling that allowed a Catholic newspaper to use "Allah" in its Malay-language edition, prompted Muslims to protest at mosques on Friday and sparked arson attacks on four churches that arose one Westmonitor church quoted.

DEFYING attacks on churches, men, women and children from the Evidential Metro Tabernacle parish sing hymns during a Sunday service as the morning hall of the Malaysian Chinese Association party in Kuala Lumpur, on Jan. 10.

On Saturday night visited the badly damaged Protestant church and offered a grant of half a million ringgit ($148,100) to help to rebuild.

Government promises to provide police to protect churches were thrown into doubt after Malaysia's top police officer said on Sunday he did not have the manpower to do so and urged the churches to step up security themselves.

"We are alarmed with the escalation of violence and urge for calm to prevail in the country," Rev. Hermen Shastri, secretary-general to the Council of Churches Malaysia, told Reuters.

Malaysia is mainly Muslim and Malay but there are substantial ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities who mainly practice Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity.

It was these minorities that handed the government its biggest ever losses in 2008 state and national elections in part due to feelings of religious marginalization and growing disillusionment with corruption.

The Catholic Herald says that it needs to use the word "Allah" to describe the Christian God in order to serve Malay-speaking Christians in Borneo. Christians account for 9.1 percent of the population.

Some Malaysian Muslims say that the paper wrote to use the word to confuse and convert Muslims and by midday Sunday 159,262 people have signed up for a Facebook group that opposes Christians using "Allah." Reuters

6.5 quake strikes off California coast

FRESNO, CALIFORNIA—A MAGNITUDE-6.5 earthquake struck off the coast of northern California, damaging buildings, knocking out power in several coastal communities and leaving a trail of broken windows and debris south of the Oregon border.

The quake hit at about 4:27 p.m. about 35 kilometers from Ferndale, the U.S. Geological Survey said.

Authorities said no major injuries have been reported. But several people received minor cuts and scrapes from broken glass at the Stephens Mall in Ferndale, and an elderly person fell and broke a hip, authorities said.

California is one of the world's most seismically active regions. More than 300 faults crisscross the state, which sits atop two of Earth's major tectonic plates, the Pacific and North American plates. About 10,000 quakes each year rattle southern California alone, although most of them are too small to be felt.

The damage created by an earthquake depends greatly on where it hits. A 7.1 quake—much stronger than Saturday's 6.5 temblor—hit the Mojave Desert in 1999 but caused only a few injuries and no deaths.

By contrast the 1994 Northridge quake under Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley was magnitude-6.7. It killed 72 people, injured more than 9,000 and caused $20 billion in damage. And the magnitude-7.1 quake in October 1989 centered in the Santa Cruz Mountains on the San Andreas fault caused nearly $2 billion in damage. AP

Second Thai minister quits over $2.57B-corruption scandal

BANGKOK—THAILAND'S DEPUTY Public Health minister resigned on Sunday after being implicated in a corruption scandal over a $2.57-billion healthcare scheme.

Manit Nopamornbodhee was the second minister to quit over the high-profile scandal, which has embarrassed an embattled coalition government as it prepares to face more protests and a no-confidence motion in parliament.

Public Health Minister Witthaya Kaewparadai, a member of the ruling Democrat Party, stepped down on Dec. 29 but the ex-head of his deputy to follow suit had highlighted tension within a six-party coalition fraught with tense infighting.

After the backing of his Bhumjai Thai party, the second biggest coalition partner, Manit had joined calls by Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva to quit in what analysts said was a sign of growing disunity in the government.

"I insist that I have never been involved in this so-called corruption case, however, I have to resign to show my responsibility and to reduce political pressure on my Bhumjai Thai party," Manit told reporters.

Four ministers have resigned, three over corruption scandals, since the government took office a year ago, citing graft-busting as one of its priorities.

Abhisit said on his weekly television address on Sunday that he would finalize a list for a new cabinet reshuffle later this week.

A fact-finding panel last month recommended that Witthaya, Manit and nine others be disciplined for banking state money plans to build facilities and buy medical equipment deemed unnecessary or grossly overpriced by local health officials.

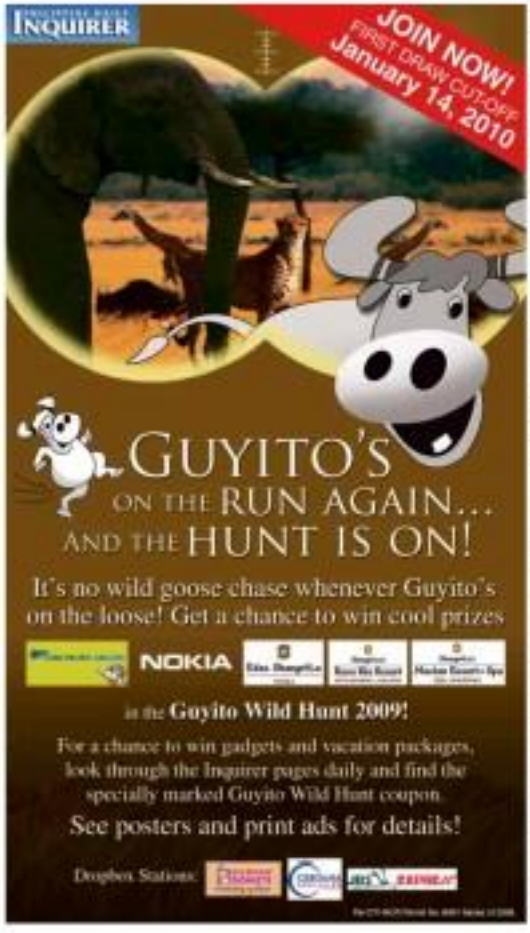
Manit came under particular scrutiny for the amount of money allocated for construction of car parks, medical wards and the purchase of medical equipment at inflated prices in his constituency of Buriram province.

The health project came under the government's $43 billion economic stimulus package, aimed at speeding up economic revival but also seen as a move to boost the government's popularity.

The scandal will provide fodder to anti-government protesters planning a rally at the end of this month, which they say will be their biggest yet in their campaign to oust the government.

The "red shirt" protests by supporters of ousted former premier Thaksin Shinawatra are planned to coincide with a censure motion to parliament led by the opposition Pheu Thai party, which the twice-elected billionaire founded.

Concerns about a violence during the protests have had an impact on markets in Southeast Asia's second biggest economy, which suffered downgrades to its sovereign credit ratings as a result of previous clashes. Reuters



NY man charged in terror case

NEW YORK—A 23-YEAR-OLD Queens College graduate who traveled to Pakistan in 2008 with the Toronto airport double bus driver indicted last year in an al-Qaeda bomb plot was charged on Saturday with conspiring to commit murder in a foreign country and receiving training from the group.

The government unsealed the third case brought by federal prosecutors in Brooklyn investigating Penn when Attorney General ERIC H. Holder Jr. has called "one of the most serious terrorist threats to our country" since the Sept. 11 attacks.

The charges against the man, Adis Medunjanin, 23, contained in an indictment unsealed Saturday afternoon in US District Court in Brooklyn, did not relate directly to the bomb plot to attack the shuttle bus drivers, Najibullah Zazi, 24, who charged in September.

A Bosnian-born naturalized American citizen, the black-haired Medunjanin was arraigned briefly on Saturday in his arraignment.

Medunjanin faces a maximum of life in prison if convicted of the most serious charge, conspiring to commit murder in a foreign country.

The indictment charges that Medunjanin conspired to commit murder in a foreign country between August and October 2008, and as part of that plot flew to Doha, Qatar, and on to Peshawar, Pakistan, from Newark Liberty International Airport on Aug. 28, 2008. NYT

Group of S. Korean doctors seeks to stop abortions

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA—IN A COUNTRY WHERE ABORtion is both widespread and, with few exceptions, against the law, two physicians are hoping to force South Korea's first serious public discussion of the ethics of the procedure.

The group they formed, Gynob, has called on doctors to declare whether they have performed illegal abortions. In December, they set up another organization, Pro-Life Doctors, which aims to discourage women from having abortions and runs a hotline to report clinics that perform them illegally. The result, they plan to begin reporting practitioners of such abortions to the police.

Gynob's recently-based campaign is unusual for South Korea, where abortion carries little of the emotional or religious significance that it does in many Western countries. But it is gaining attention here in no small part because it is coinciding with a very public reassessment of abortion by the government, which is looking for ways to reverse a decline in South Korea's birth rate.

For decades, the government tended to look the other way seeing a high birth rate as an impediment to economic growth. In the 1970s and 1980s, families with more than two children were denounced as unpatriotic.

Now, the government has concluded that this policy was too successful.

South Korea's fertility rate, which stood at 4.5 children per woman in the 1970s, had fallen to 1.19 children by 2008, one of the lowest rates in the world. The government fears that the recent financial downturn may have depressed it further, and that the country's rapidly aging population will undercut the economy's stability.

Based on insurance data and a government spot-check, many academics researchers have concluded that the high exceptions to the anti-abortion law applied to only about 4 percent of an estimated 340,000 abortions performed in 2005.

In addition to government policy and the economics of health care, social factors have contributed to the abortion rate. A bias for boys and against the disabled led to the widespread practice of aborting female fetuses or those with physiological defects, said Choi Seung-hee, a professor of social welfare at Seoul National University. A stigma against unmarried mothers, women's increasing participation in the workforce and the high cost of education are also seen as contributing to the trend. AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE
■ Magic clip Hawks' wings /A30

SPORTS
Editor Teodoro S. Mateo Jr.
Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Ochoa

Pacquiao-Clottey headed to Texas

Roach rejects M'weather compromise

By Francis T.J. Ochoa

MANNY PACQUIAO WILL REPORT FOR TRAINING AS SCHEDULED, this time against Ghanaian and former world champion Andriy Clottey, for a March 13 fight that looks headed to Arlington, Texas.

Hall of fame trainer Freddie Roach announced this yesterday even as he shot down efforts by Golden Boy Promotions chief executive officer Richard Schaefer to salvage Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s earlier date with the Pacman.

"I don't think there's any hope (for the Pacquiao-Mayweather fight), the deadline for HBO is past," Roach told the Los Angeles Times in a report also published on the online edition yesterday.

"Manny is going to fight Clottey on March 13 and we're just going to move on."

Moves to Arlington, that is.

Arlington is a Texas city 20 kilometers west of Dallas. It hosts the Cowboys Stadium, which is home to American football's Dallas Cowboys.

Top Rank chief Bob Arum said the Pacquiao-Clottey fight could be headed to the 80,000-seater stadium and one of those involved in purchase tickets for the bout is former US President George W. Bush.

"He (Bush) said that he loves Pacquiao," Arum told Yesterday.fromsports.com.

Arum spoke with the former president when he sat in a luxury box with Dallas Cowboys and Courtesan Stadium owner Jerry Jones during negotiations for hosting Pacquiao's next bout.

"This will be the biggest announcement for the sport of boxing, ever," Arum told the boxing site, adding that there will be a press conference to announce the fight on Jan. 18 at the Cowboys Stadium, followed by another on Jan. 19 in New York.

"The... definitely going to sign for it tomorrow and Jr. makes the deal tomorrow."

The developments certainly point to the final nail in the coffin of the Pacquiao-Mayweather superfight, although Schaefer insisted that the so-called "Fight of the Century" could still be salvaged.

"Let's split it down the middle and do this fight," Schaefer told Yesterday.

Negotiations for the fight collapsed when both camps could not agree on drug-testing protocols—a measure that dropped up following accusations from the Mayweather camp that Pacquiao used performance-enhancing drugs.

The Mayweather camp wanted Olympic-type random testing until the eve of the fight while Pacquiao wanted testing to end 30 days before the fight.

(©FHIA Cortez gets his biggest opponent yet in career division: Jhong Manny Pacquiao. INQUIRER.NET

A 14-day proposal was made during mediation, but no compromise was reached.

"I cannot find a reasonable person who doesn't think that's a fair compromise," The Ring quoted Schaefer as saying. "If Pacquiao walks away from what I and many people consider a fair compromise, that tells it."

Roach said he was previously optimistic that the fight would push through.

Floyd pulling away

"I definitely thought this fight would happen when Manny beat Miguel (Cotto, in November)," Roach said. "Did as we got close to the fight, we could see Floyd pulling away.

"That's not like it he just doesn't want to fight."

Mayweather has been called a "psychological coward" by Arum after negotiations broke down.

Pacquiao (50-3-2, 38 knockouts) has come back strong after the fight's fallout and retains until his refund to undergo random checks cuts a shadow of doubt on the credibility of his victories.

But his stature of Clottey (35-3, 26 KOs) as the next opponent boosted his mark. The rugged and dangerous Ghana, New York-based welterweight nearly pulled off an upset against Cotto in last year before dropping a narrow decision on the Puerto Rican star.

Possible Mayweather foe

Mayweather's unrelenting third list of possible replacements includes Bamboyan Boxer Rodel Mayweather and unbeaten Englishman Matthew Hatton, whose brother Ricky was knocked out by both Mayweather (13th round) and Pacquiao (2nd round).

PACQUIAO intends to bank a skinner purse in a fight with the man Miguel Cotto narrowly beat last year. AFP/JOSE MANUEL RIBEIRO

UST tossers sweep Ateneo in UAAP wars

By Cedelf P. Tupaz

UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS, THE UAAP men's championship books, launched its softball and baseball campaigns with commanding wins over Ateneo at the Rizal Memorial ballpark in Manila over the weekend.

The Tigers, fourth placers last year, posted a thrilling 13-9 victory to gain the early lead in baseball yesterday a day after the Tigresses secured a commanding 11-1 win.

National University prevailed in the other baseball match by whipping University of the Philippines, 7-4.

It was a day of sweep in softball with defending champion Adamson crushing La Salle, 13-0, and UE outclassing UST 7-0, also Saturday.

Victoria Fernandez drove home Mitzi Castillo and Carlo Gaspar in the sixth inning with a single that proved decisive for the Tigers as the UST 408

RP fives drop games in Doha, KL / A28, A29

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KL Dragons gobble up RP Patriots

FILIPINO IMPORTS RUBY LINGAYAY AND ROEL HUGASIAN STARRED in a fourth-quarter outburst that powered the Kuala Lumpur Dragons past the Philippine Patriots, 97-59, in the Asean Basketball League Saturday night at the Shaw Stadium in Malaysia.

The surging Maureen Ann, which came just three days after a 67-59 road game outlook against the Singapore Slingers, realized the Patriots' bid for the top semifinal berth.

Lingayay, a former University of the East guard, finished a 14-6 run that knotted the Dragons' slim 32-31 lead to an 11-point advantage, 46-35, to the final quarter.

He finished with 14 points, while Hugasian added 10 rainbow and eight rebounds to lead the Dragons in dealing the Patriots' first back-to-back setback.

Despite remaining on top at 9-4, the Patriots are now under pressure from the second-seeding Slingers (7-4), who have a shot at wresting the top spot in the final two weeks of the three-round elimination phase.

The Dragons boosted their own semifinal bid with a 9-7 record, just half a game behind the Brunei Barracudas.

The Patriots failed to take advantage of the ejection of Cantonmaine import Chris Banin, the league's leading scorer with an average of 20.6 points, along with two other Kuala Lumpur player following a scuffle in the 6:15 mark in the second period.

"The players just did what they had to do for this game offensively and defensively," said coach Chong Huat Goh of the Dragons, who held the Patriots to just eight points in the final period.

Jason Dixon registered his eighth double-double performance with 25 points and 13 rebounds, but hardly got help from the rest of the Patriots.

Whatever in their two previous encounters against the Dragons, the Batangas squad ran with a measly 26 percent shooting clip this time. *Jasmine B. Payo*

ROEL Hugasian (left), the crack Filipino import of the Kuala Lumpur Dragons, takes a shot off RP Patriots' Bob Walter right.

The scores:
KUALA LUMPUR 97 – Lingayay 14, Hugasian 13, Dixon 13, Hindberg 9, Gill 9, Ibe 8, Kahn 7, Ruiz 4, Sukmanan 2, Yu Jung 0, Kelly Jung 0.
PHILIPPINES 59 – Dixon 25, Mamangun 12, Alcantara 10, Bonifacio 4, Ibe 4, Kahn 3, Ambos 1, Ibe 0, Salvo 0, Walter 0, Gerona 0, Fajardo 0.
Quarters: 21-11, 41-32, 72-51, 97-59.

PSC 'can best handle sports donations'

By Jane Mesares

PRIVATE DONATIONS FOR SPORTS ARCHITecture accounted for if they are handled by the Philippine Sports Commission, according to the head of the government agency.

PSC chair Harry Angping said "tenthousers can source financial support for athletes through the sports agency instead of donating them straight to the Philippine Olympic Committee and the national sports associations.

"Nothing personal," said Angping. "It's all a matter of accountability.

"Once the fund is sourced through the PSC, we will guarantee its proper allocation. We will be held accountable for whatever happens to the money."

PSC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Jr. announced last week that certain private "godfathers" have shown interest in supporting national athletes.

Cojuangco said a sponsor has already committed to take care of several Team Philippines' training for the Asian Games. Baldwin, campaigning in the 71-All Filipinos, screamed for one of the country's 18 gold medals in the recent Laos Southeast Asian Games.

Angping said private funds under the care of the PSC will be dedicated properly since the government is accountable to the donors.

"Say, there is an envoy pays to good (ex)," said Angping. "I know all SEAs are gentlemen. We just have to make sure that all athletes, and SEAs, are getting their fair share."

The two-time former Manila representative raised about P4 million from private sponsors like Lacoste Corp., Pantie Online, Tagaytay Highlands, Discovery Suites and Smoking Bath for the benefit of the SEA Games athletes.

Ikeda, Ardina co-faves in RP Ladies Open

ARDINA: Big season kick-off

By Mesang R. Castillo

THE 40TH PHILIPPINE LADIES OPEN amateur golf championship tees off Wednesday with former champion Dottie Ardina and Dottie Ardina as the top favorites.

Ikeda, a double gold medalist in the recent Southeast Asian Games in Laos, and Ardina are the odds-on picks in the proamateur event with the absence of defending champion Jenine Mendoza.

Mendoza, who won this event at the expense of Ardina and South Korean Shine Lee last year, is now based in Belgium and will miss the 54-hole tournament set at the Legends course of the Manila Southwoods in Carmona, Cavite.

Aside from Lee, also out to spoil the expected Ikeda-Ardina duel are Korean Jiwon Cho, Mi Seon Hong and Ming Ren.

Singapore will be represented by Stephanie Lai, Joey Rebecca Koh Koh Hwee, with Genevieve Ling Libyc, Celeste Jo, Cheryl Lo, Aretha Bei Heng, Vanessa Chin Wei Yi, Nurul Sarmadie carrying the fight for Malaysia.

Aside from the nonoptimum championship division, the tournament also features ladies in Class A and Class B, the composition of which will be classified on the second day.

The field will be composed of players from the country's top clubs, including Ayala, Eagle Ridge, Southwoods, Valley Golf, Orchard, Riviera, Tagaytay Highlands, Alta Mesa, Forest Hills, Puerto del Sol, Camp 81, Del Monte and Hasy.

It's actually a three-cornered local fight among Ikeda, the 2006 champion here, Ardina and Mia Pineda, who formed the RP squad that won the SEA Games event in gold.

Ardina, a golf scholar in Florida, also had an outstanding season last year, winning twice in the Force Collegiate World Tour (FCWT) – the Naples Bradt Challenge and the Champions Tour Challenge, both in Florida.

UST tossers . . .

From page A-27

Singles rallied with six wins in the losses of the game tandem.

UST proved too good for Ateneo with Ana Carina Baghdasarian smashing a panel dam home run in the sixth after Dottie Rodriguez smashed a three-bagger in the fourth.

Filling the role left by pitcher Chloie Mayers, rookie Julie Marie Hipolito made an impressive debut for the Lady Tigresses by smashing for a three-hitter with 4 runs for 4 innings.

Ellan Bautista, Sharlene dela Cruz and Ateneo Angco scored two runs each for Ateneo which is seeking its sixth title in seven years.

PSALM Power Sector Assets & Liabilities Management Corporation

INVITATION TO BID

The Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation ("PSALM") Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee (the "Committee") invites interested parties to participate in and bid for the privatization of the following:

The 245 MW Angat Hydroelectric Power Plant
located in Norzagaray, Bulacan

(the "Asset"). The Asset is being privatized on an "as-is where-is" basis.

Interested parties must submit a Letter of Interest ("LOI") to the Committee, which shall state the full name, address, telephone and fax numbers of the interested party, contact person, and be duly signed by an authorized representative. All LOIs must be received by the Committee at the PSALM Office with address at the 7th Floor Bantayan Building, 6708 Ayala Avenue, Makati City, not later than 5:00 p.m. on 25 January 2016 (the "LOI Submission Deadline"). Only interested parties that submit an LOI by the LOI Submission Deadline shall be allowed to participate further in the privatization of the Asset.

As a prerequisite to the receipt of the Bidding Package, interested parties shall execute a Confidentiality Agreement and an Undertaking pursuant to Section 16 of the RSB. Both in the forms provided by PSALM, and pay a non-refundable fee in the amount of Two Thousand Five Hundred U.S. Dollars (U.S.$ 2,500.00) (the "Participation Fee"). The Participation Fee shall be either in cash, manager's check, or cashier's check. All bank charges, if any, shall be for the account of the interested party. The Confidentiality Agreement, Undertaking, and Participation Fee must be received by the Committee on or before 5:00 p.m. on 29 January 2016, to entitle an interested party to further participation in the privatization of the Asset.

The Bidding Package, which includes the Bidding Procedures, shall be issued during office hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) from 05 February to 10 February 2016 (the "Deadline") at the PSALM Office. Only interested parties who have submitted the LOI and have received the Bidding Package by the Deadline will be allowed to participate further in the privatization of the Asset.

An interested party that submits the LOI must be the party that will participate in the privatization process, submit a bid, and enter into the pertinent agreements. Once an interested party submits the Confidentiality Agreement and Undertaking and pays the Participation Fee, such interested party may no longer be substituted in the privatization process, except through a consortium in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Bidding Procedures, among the requirements of which are: (i) such interested party must own at least a majority of the shares outstanding and entitled to vote in such consortium; (ii) the consortium must be a juridical entity; and (iii) a letter responding to bid through consortium must be submitted to the Committee on or before the deadline set for this purpose in the Bidding Procedures.

The schedule of the bidding activities is as follows:

Pre-Bid Conference	12 January 2016 (10:00 a.m.) (1 week before the Bid Submission Deadline)
Bid Submission Deadline	11 February 2016, 2:00 p.m. at the PSALM Office
Bid Submission Deadline	180 days (6+6)

Extension to the dates and times shall be issued on Manila time. Should any of the above dates fall on a holiday, the deadline shall be extended to the same time of the immediately succeeding business day in Makati City.

A late-submitted bidding envelope shall be accepted. Interested Parties will be required to post a bid security equivalent to Five Million U.S. Dollars (U.S.$ 5,000,000.00) in the form of an irrevocable letter of credit, which must be acceptable to the Committee. The bid security of the winning bidder shall be substituted by a performance security to guarantee prompt, faithful, and complete performance of its obligations under the transaction. The details of the privatization of the Asset are contained in the Bidding Package.

Letters of Interest, Confidentiality Agreements, and Undertakings shall be addressed and submitted to The Chairperson, Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee, PSALM Corporation, 7th Floor Bantayan Building, 6708 Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Philippines. Inquiries and clarifications shall be addressed to Atty. Dennis D. Trinidad, Jr. of the PSALM Office, at telephone number (632) 890-6020 or e-mail address corporate@psalm.gov.ph.

The Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any interested party or bidder or proposal or bid therefrom, or any part thereof, and/or to waive any defects contained therein and accept the offer advantageous to the Government, without offering any reason whatsoever. It does not assume any obligation to compensate or indemnify parties for any expenses or loss that they may incur as a result of their participation in the privatization process, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made. Finally, it reserves the right to modify, supplement, or change the Bidding Procedures and other aspects of the privatization process at any time, including the schedule and the venue provided herein, for any reason whatsoever and without giving prior notice. Interested parties and/or bidders shall be notified subsequently of such modifications, supplements, or changes.

PSALM Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee

NCA World Championship tomorrow

EVERYTHING IS IN PLACE FOR THE three-day National Cockers Alliance-Makati Championship Derby which consists of 1,000 entries at the Tiaong Sports Arena in Pasig City.

The event, which will also hold fights on Jan. 14 and 16, was launched Saturday at the Filoil Shangri-La hotel in Mandaluyong City with Filipino and international promotion facing the media.

The championship holders include NCA members Rudy Albano, Jimmy Ang, Bicktil Antonio, Hip Igot Arroyo, Bertie Bonavidez, Ric Cuding, Miles Cunlan, Tito de Guzman, Tito dela Rosa, Joe Fernando, Teddy Gelvezon, Pete Icasa, Jun Jingco, Rudy Jingco, JV Magsaysay, Ricky Magtoto, Bobby Medina, Steve Medina, Danny Mendoza, Elias Ngolab, Elmer Sepacruzan, Gary Ramos, Raul Recafort, Jun Remigio, Fary Sandin, Rebee Uy, Jaime Uy, Mark Villareal, Bebot Villa, Jr. Yuanto, Madhanghyan brothers, Danny Tivoy, and Tony Machar.

CLASH OF WORLD'S BEST – Top US breeder Carl Steinhauer (left) and Filipino champion Gerry Ramos show two of the finest fighting cocks in Saturday's launch of the NCA World Championship Derby at the Filoil Shangri-La.

Heading the American contingent are George Tassi, Rusty Scruggs, Boyd and Allen Gardner, Tom Wilson and HR Ace Beer Medina Barrera.

Among the invited cockers Manolo Ramos, Cesar Ang, Ben Ngolab, Dante Ang, Gilbert Ang, Ramon Ang, Ali Cuffman, James Ang, Ricky Valencia, Philip Cheng, Capt. Dole, Jun Bong Revilla, David Singson, Bong Revilla, Marcio G. Grace Poe, Jay Jay Ramos Mendoza, Jun Cruz, Jimmy Mendoza, Jun Cruz, Jimmy Ramos, Jun Ng Revilla, Rudy G. Rebel Rivas, Pat Libunao, Butch Dalmido Ocado, Dominic Ang, Gerry Pangilinan, Jun Tanada, the Salcedo, Jerry Pineda and Boy de Rosa.

US cockers seeking redemption

VISITING AMERICAN COCKER BREEDers are eager and ready to prove the Isabel Dalton Cup – the most coveted prize in international multiple top – which will be at stake on Jan. 14, 15, 20, 21 and 23 at the Big Dome in Cubao.

According to Ginny Marcial, organizers affairs and PR manager of the Araneta Group, the powerhouse United States contingent will include aspirants Jimmy Mendez, Derby champion Ray Alexander of Alabama (1993 and 1995), 2001 winner Roger Roberts of Georgia, Brad Fedgate of Oregon, Rowell's owner-breeder Lalaines Bing-Del Re Rab Garcia, Jeff Hodgewich and Tom Cooper, both from North Carolina, Scott Crowder and Jorge Davis of California, Wilson Caffrey of Oklahoma, Mike Pomeroy of Hawaii and Reep "Guy" Cobia, also from California.

Mainly because of their all-star lineup, the Americans are expected to give their Filipino counterparts a much tougher outing.

In the past, local cockfighting aficionados competed against legendary American cockers Invincible Duke Hubery, Joe Goode, Bob "Hoover" Billy Allen, Gene Allen, Billy Mabe, Ira Sims, Jim Alexander, Tom Wilson, Clark Nemeth, Jorge "Oscar" Acosta.

* * *

Leading the local participants in cocking assembly Henry Lopez of Blue Blade, who is fielding four entries, including his multi-talked, absolutely fearless (Gamefowl Pitbull) cream breeds.

Lopez recently bagged the Lopez Gamefowl Breeders' Association's 2000 Breeder of the Year title, which he shared with Bel Rosenkranz. Both have farms in San Pablo City.

Also in the field is defending champion Marcelo Adio, who is fielding two entries in winning Sweater Lessons and Mr. Michael Lessons. Sweater Strike and Kidapawan Hawks Lessons and Greg Lessons Army. A cocky regular who represents a farm in Cape Cod, Adio finished second to Lopez in 2014, winning 4-3 points with his entry MT1 SAM Flash Bomba.

Asked about his chances of pulling off back-to-back championships, Adio said: "I will be back for the title."

"It took many long years for a U.S. pioneer to win Derby Kindom and this PDI Country Bred did it first in 1990," said Antonio, "proving once more just how tough it is to win the NCA Derby Cup."

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Sioco

Qatar gets back at RP Smart Gilas five in OT

SMART Gilas team captain Chris Tiu, shown eluding his defender in this file photo, scores 11 points against the Qatar national squad.

PLAYING AGGRESSIVELY THIS TIME, TIU OWNS NATIONAL TEAM bounced back with a 77-69 overdrive triumph over the Smart Gilas Pilipinas squad in their second exhibition match Saturday night at the Ghantoot Stadium in Doha.

Chris Tiu's triple with six seconds left ended regulation in a tie all, but the Qatari hurled two consecutive free points in extra time that took the sting out of the Filipinos, who host their hosts this Sat., the earlier night.

"Normally, there's no overtime to an exhibition match," said Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas executive director Noli Bala.

"I guess Qatar wanted to win at least one game."

Coach Rufino Estrellado said the RP team supposedly bars gametime in Qatar as their preparation for the tough 21st Qatar International Tournament on Jan. 14 to 23.

Bala said Smart Gilas will be in Group B of the Dubai meet along with India (Indian Navy Pros A) Jaldal Syriaset, Oman Championship Lebanon and Emirates (UAE) Al Nasr Club.

The Qatari nationals, coached on six days every other week by former Smart Gilas mentor Abdulla Ali Ibrahim, finished

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres
Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ochoa

SPORTS

SOUTHEAST LEADERS' SHOWDOWN

Magic clip Hawks' wings

LOVE LOST Minnesota Timberwolves big man Kevin Love (32) goes up for a jumper against Chicago Bulls rookie Taj Gibson. Love's efforts were down the drain as the Timberwolves lost to the Bulls. AP

ORLANDO, FLORIDA—THE ORLANDO Magic crushed the Atlanta Hawks, 113-91, in a one-sided showdown of the Southeast Division's top two teams Saturday.

The Magic blew out the Hawks with a 37-point second quarter performance to snap a four-game losing streak and stretch their division lead to one and a half games.

J.J Redick scored 17 points while starting for injured guard Vince Carter, sparking an 11-0 run in the second quarter that led to a 56-37 halftime lead.

"If I'm out there, I'm going to try to play hard," Redick told reporters. "The scores doesn't matter. I'm trying to prove myself as a player, regardless of the score on the scoreboard."

Redick earned the start when Carter missed the game with a sprained left shoulder.

"He's just a guy that I think we've come to trust," Magic coach Stan Van Gundy said. "He's not going to make mistakes.

He's a tough guy. He's gonna compete hard."

"They did kinda played like they wanted to stay at the top and are didn't," Hawks coach Mike Woodson said in explaining the big lost.

In other NBA games, Dearborn ripped Memphis, 89-87; Philadelphia nested York Detroit, 104-94; Oklahoma City rolled past Indiana, 108-102; Chicago dubbed Minnesota, 110-95; Houston stopped New York, 103-96; Utah clipped Dallas, 111-95 and Sacramento edged Denver, 102-100.

In Los Angeles, California, Spoke Evans made the defending jump shot in the final second as the Kings snapped a season-record five-game losing skid in style against the Denver Nuggets.

Evans, who finished with 27 points, sunk a 10-footer to cap a wild fourth quarter where the lead changed hands frequently. Jit Smith missed a desperation 3-point attempt at the buzzer.

In Oklahoma City, Kevin Durant matched his season-high with 46 points as the Thunder ended the Indiana Pacers.

Danny Granger scored 25 points to lead Indiana, which has lost nine straight road games.

In Chicago, the Bulls won their first game in four outings by defeating the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Joakim Noah had 20 points and nine rebounds, and Rick Hamilt had 20 points and seven assists for the Bulls.

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Detroit won by Philadelphia, falling to its 13th straight loss.

The losing skid is the Pistons' worst since 1992-93.

Elton Brand matched a season high with 23 points for the 76ers, and Jrue Gordon had 20 points, including the 33 millionth point in NBA history. REUTERS, AP

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Davydenko rules Doha tilt; Roddick triumphs

DAVYDENKO AP

DOHA, QATAR—NIKOLAY DAVYDENKO OF Russia saved two match points Saturday before rallying to beat Rafael Nadal, 6-6, 7-6 (5), 6-4, to win the Qatar Open.

Davydenko's third straight victory over the second-ranked Spaniard improved his record to 5-4. He also became the 38th male player since the Open Era began in 1968 to win 20 or more titles.

It was a second consecutive title for Davydenko after winning the London Nitoli Tour Finals on Nov. 29. He beat Nadal and Roger Federer in that event, as he did there.

In Brisbane, Australia, top-seeded Andy Roddick survived a second-set collapse Sunday to win the Brisbane International title, beating defending champion Radek Stepanek after the Czech player double-faulted on match point.

The American's 7-6 (2), 7-6 (7) victory in the final capped his first tournament in nearly three months due to a 2009 season-ending knee injury.

Roddick nearly let the match slip away. He led 4-0 in the second set before Stepanek came back to take a 6-5 lead, with Roddick needing to hold service to force a tiebreaker.

The Czech player held a set point at 7-6 in the second-set tiebreaker. Roddick won the next two points on serve, then watched Stepanek double-fault to hand him the title.

The women's retreat went to top seed Elena Dijkovic who saved two match points and then wasted three before clinching, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (6), over seven-time Grand Slam titlist and fellow Belgian Justine Henin on Saturday.

Dijkovic, only five tournaments into her own comeback, also won the U.S. Open. AP

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Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano
BUSINESS

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DTI: Investments hinge on election success

Investors wait and see what will happen in May

By Abigail L. Ho

WHILE MAINTAINING ITS characteristic optimism, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) says investment inflows for the year will hinge on the orderly conduct of elections and the person who will end up leading the next administration.

According to Trade Secretary Peter Favila, investors are opting to take a wait-and-see stance before making final decisions regarding new initiatives.

"Investment levels in 2010 will depend on the outcome of the elections. Investors like to see what will happen. This January, applications will still come in, but to what client purpose will go all the ground, we still don't know," he said.

"Investors will do some preliminary work before they decide. Their decision will really depend on the conduct of elections and who will win. The orderliness of elections is a very important consideration for them."

While the DTI maintains its bullishness, it has declined to name specific targets for the year, Favila said.

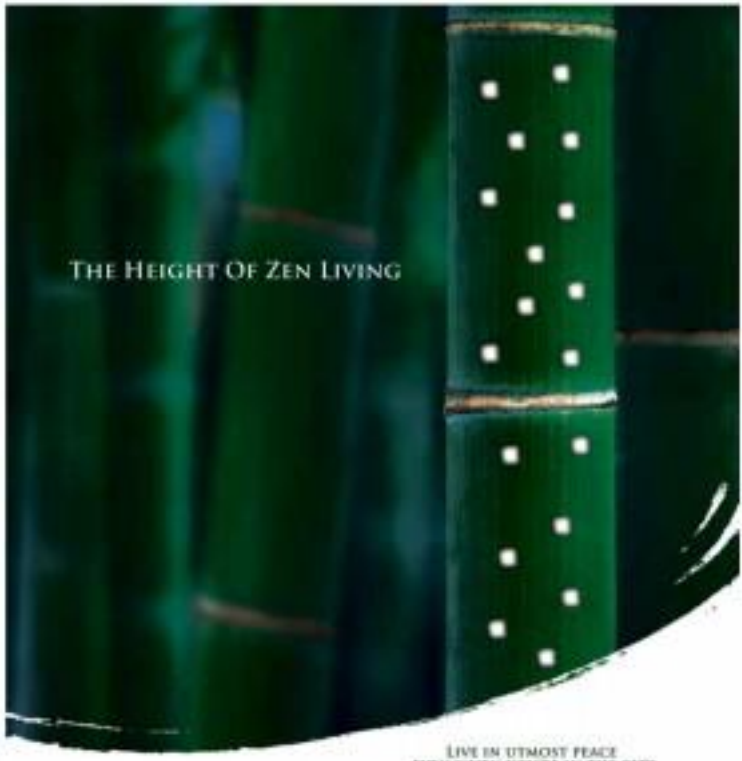
Asked whether the government was able to meet its 2009 investment targets, he said final figures had yet to come in.

At the start of 2009, he said, inflations were expected to reach P450 billion in 2009—P269 billion from the Board of Investments (BOI) and P170 billion from the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza).

The P380 billion reported BOI investments for the year, he said, were roughly just the same as 2008's P388.4 billion. Projected Peza investments, meanwhile, registered a growth of around 50 percent from the P154.8-billion figure registered in 2008.

Peza was able to surpass its 2009 invest-

BIZ to 2a



Range-bound trade seen ahead

SHARE PRICES ON THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange are expected to trade sideways with a possible negative bias this week as bulk of investors continue to wait on the sidelines for clearer signals on the corporate and economic fronts.

According to AB Capital Securities, many fund managers remain cautious about the market's prospects for this year.

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8 foreign companies eye $200-M MRT expansion contract

By Paola G. Manuzello

EIGHT FOREIGN FIRMS have expressed their interest to participate in the government's $200-million project to increase the capacity of the Metro Rail Transit (MRT) system.

The expansion project, which will involve the purchase of additional train sets, installation of an improved traffic management system and an automatic fare collection scheme, is meant to decongest and improve the services of the 16km train line used by over half-a-million people a day.

"So far, there have been eight interested companies," MRT General Manager Reynaldo Berroya said in a recent interview.

Among the companies currently vying for the deal are China Northrail and Orion Southrail. Canadian company Bombardier Inc. also submitted an unsolicited proposal, Berroya said.

Other firms from Australia, Italy and Korea have also expressed interest in the project, he said.

The MRT runs along Edsa, which is Metro Manila's main thoroughfare. The line runs from North Avenue in Quezon City to Taft Avenue in Pasay City.

There are not enough rail coaches to transport over 500,000 people each day. The MRT's 72 coaches—63 of which are used daily and 10 kept in the railway depot for maintenance—are designed to carry only 350,000 passengers.

The capacity expansion will involve the purchase of an additional 73 train coaches, which will shorten the waiting time between train trips.

The project's expected price tag, Berroya said, is currently pegged at about $217 million (nearly P10 billion).

Berroya clarified that no financial call for bidders had been announced yet. But the terms of reference for a project bidding is close to being finalized.

For now, the MRT operator will study the proposals of the interested parties to see if any good deals have been offered to the government, the official added.

In 2006, the government, through two state-owned banks, acquired a majority stake in MRT Corp.—the company that operates the train line—under a build-operate-transfer (BOT) arrangement—from a consortium of private investors.

This allowed the government to save money since it would no longer have to pay then-investor the MRT Consortium, which was on top of the massive rehabilitation the train underwent for passenger lines.

Before the expansion project is allowed to be bidden, the Development Bank of the Philippines and the Land Bank of the Philippines will first have to sell their stakes in the MRT operator to the government.

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PRU-ACT Peso Equity Fund	1.2093	1.2093
PRU-ACT Balanced Fund	0.9562	0.9600
Principal Protect 1	0.9869	0.9800
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Principal Protect 3	0.9663	0.9663
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No more zero tariff for wheat, cement imports

Measure's impact hardly felt, says trade official

By Abigail L. Ho

THE GOVERNMENT WILL NO longer extend the zero-tariff schemes implemented for milling wheat and cement but says so it no longer uses the level for such a measure.

Trade Undersecretary Zenaida Maglaya said that for milling wheat, for example, the effect of the tariff cut was hardly felt.

"When we extended (the zero-tariff scheme), we hardly saw the impact. We're not getting the full benefit of the reduction in private sector revenues. If there's a reduction in revenue, then we must feel the positive impact," she told reporters.

"That we're still hearing the matter up to the (Cabinet-level Tariff and Related Matters committee), We'll also look into world wheat prices," she added.

Malacañang issued Executive Order No. 793 in November 2008, slashing the duty on milling wheat and feed wheat imports from three percent to zero.

When the six-month expiries ended in July last year, President Arroyo issued EO 818, extending for another six months the duty-free importation of milling wheat.

EO 818, however, no longer included feed wheat, as rosy farmers said their crop could not fairly compete with feed wheat as a food component due to the non-duty privilege.

Wheat tariff is now back in three percent.

Maglaya said the government was also not keen on keeping to meat tariff at zero.

"There will be no more extension (of the EO cutting the tariff to zero)," she said.

As with wheat, Malacañang also issued an EO bringing cement tariff down to zero to November 2008. The EO was in force for six months. Another EO was issued in July, extending the zero-tariff regime for cement for another six months.

With the lapse of the EO, a 3-per-cent levy will again be slapped on Dondani cement from countries of Southeast Asian Nations member economies and a 5-percent tariff will be re-imposed on cement coming from other parts of the world.

DTI says flour millers may face profiteering charges

AFTER SAYING IT WILL FILE PROFITEERING charges against cement industry players who "still" be caught overpricing or hoarding their products, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is now threatening to do the same with flour millers.

Trade Secretary Peter Favila said he has asked his staff to look into the possibility of filing charges against flour millers for allegedly violating the Price Act.

"We will call them for a meeting so they can explain why they need to raise prices. They know that they have to inform us before they implement any adjustment. If they don't inform us, then they should also expect to not be informed of the action that we will take," he said Friday morning.

The Philippine Association of Flour Millers said its 18 flour-or-mill prices would likely increase by P0.50 per 25-kilogram bag this month due to high wheat prices in the world market.

The prices and the scarcity of high-protein wheat, or the kind that bakers preferred due to its consistent baking quality, was alerting world wheat players.

The bulk of the main harvest of wheat-exporting countries consisted of lower-protein wheat, plus Japan's premium on the high-protein variety.

Federal and world wheat prices were expected to increase even more until the next harvest in October.

But in an earlier interview, Trade Undersecretary Zenaida Maglaya said local flour prices should not go up at this point, as millers still had inventories good for around a month or two. Abigail L. Ho

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Planning Mindanao's future

No Free Lunch
Cielito F. Habito

SURELY ONE OF THE MOST prominent elements in the political platforms of candidates in national positions in the forthcoming May election is defining the right strategy for ending what is the country's most persistent and development challenge in Mindanao.

Few would dispute that Mindanao is most critical to the national future and overall well-being.

Mindanao accounts for about a third of the country's land area, a quarter of the country's population and a fifth of overall income, measured as gross domestic product or GDP.

The incongruence of these ratios already reflects an abnormality immediately in light of what must be a much greater share that Mindanao possesses of the country's natural wealth. Mindanao, in other words, could easily account for a far greater share of the country's productive potential, and hold it out there for long-standing barriers in attaining lasting peace and development therein.

New road map

It is in this light that the Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco), in cooperation with the Mindanao regional office of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), has spearheaded an effort to come up with a new 20-year blueprint for the future of Mindanao and its diverse peoples.

The previous blueprint, known as Mindanao 2000 (even though it only up to 2010), hence the need for a sequel plan now dubbed as Mindanao 2020. Nomenclature aside, the name-change because of the catchy and suggestive nature of the number (as in 20/20 vision)—the new plan will cover the period up to 2030.

It is thus intended to guide the various strategies, policies, and programs to be undertaken for Mindanao in the next two decades.

The great diversity found in Mindanao presents a daunting challenge for such a planning exercise.

There is wide variation within, in island group in terms of natural and physical endowments and attributes, historical and cultural backgrounds, ethnic composition, and political perspectives.

It would thus appear to be wishful thinking to expect that a consensus could ever be reached on the elements of such a plan.

And yet, it is this very diversity that makes it all the more imperative that wide consensus be sought on the course possible. From this, one must not entertain the illusion that universal agreement will ever be reached, especially on particular elements of the blueprint that will emerge.

Planning by listening

Key to achieving wide consensus is to adopt a listening mode in the design of the planning process.

Thus, the issues that has been put together for the work drives by-rank in "facilitating the formulation of Mindanao 2020," rather than formulating the plan itself.

Medco rightly sees Mindanao 2020 as a plan that must be crafted by the wide mass of Mindanaoans, not by a small group of experts "playing God" for Mindanao.

Indeed, Mindanaoans "coming from ordinary citizens to erudite scholars have long lamented what needs to be done to "fix" Mindanao.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel here. On content of Mindanao 2020 is largely in place.

It is the process for achieving a widely owned and supported plan that is seen to be the greater challenge.

Knowing it is impossible to hear every single Mindanaoan, one has gathered every single perspective, the Mindanao 2020 team has embarked on a planning process that seeks to maximize ownership for the plan. Three primary constituents are being employed in this end: A quick survey (QS), focus group discussions (FGDs) across Mindanao, and key informant interviews (KIIs) with prominent personalities who are knowledgeable of and/or influential in Mindanao.

Recommendations from past analyses, consultations and discussions are also being gathered from the Internet.

The QS asks two simple questions on Mindanao's future, and is being disseminated via e-mail, Internet and even text messaging.

The FGDs seek participants who can legitimately speak for sizeable entities/agencies.

The results of more than 300 FGDs undertaken by Ateneo de Davao University, Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology, Mindanao State University-Marawi, Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan, and Notre Dame University-Cotabato.

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Mindanaoans also want government that is culture-sensitive, self-reliant and responsive. They want an economy that is financially self-reliant, properly environmental and economically integrated, equitably uplifting the lives of all Mindanaoans.

They also envisage the people of Mindanao as enjoying abundant opportunities to develop their human capabilities as individuals and as communities, marked by trust and solidarity within groups, among diverse cultures, and across different regions.

How to get there? Space constraints prevent me from describing, even in general terms, the wealth of good ideas already offered so far by Mindanaoans from various walks of life.

Work continues in shaping Mindanao 2020, and will be completed only when the new leadership is in place after the elections.

After all, as critical as the key is of Mindanaoans themselves is the buy-in of our new leaders coming in 2013.

(Readers' inputs to Mindanao 2020 are welcome at chabito@amosc.edu)

Debt-for-relief funds swap urged

By Rainier W. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER asking creditors to swap the country's debt for disaster relief funds, especially as reconstruction efforts in the next three years would require at least $6.4 billion, according to Cabinet Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ralph G. Recto.

"It's time to convert the country's surplus of typhoon into a valuable economic asset," Recto said in a statement, adding that a "debt-for-disaster relief" program would free up billions in peso earmarked for debt servicing or for future borrowings.

Under Recto's proposal, the billions that the government will spend on rebuilding state efforts would be used to offset part of its outstanding debt.

"For a change, let's make our typhoons work for us," he said. "The reconstruction commission could spearhead the negotiation with multilateral lending institutions and creditor nations to grant us a debt reprieve."

The former senator, who is running for reelection, referred to the Special National Public Reconstruction Commission that was created following the devastation of Typhoons "Ondoy" and "Pepeng" last September and October.

Data from the Bureau of the Treasury show that as of end-September 2009, the government's debt stock reached P4.328 trillion.

Recto also noted that the country has so far received pledges of some $3 billion in loans and grants from local and international funding agencies for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of infrastructure projects damaged by the typhoons in September and October.

"Such amounts may already be entered as 'debt payments' in the books of our foreign creditors and multilateral lending agencies since it will go directly to typhoon rehabilitation work," Recto said.

A similar "debt swap" movement is emerging today as poor nations haggle debt concessions from their foreign creditors in exchange for taking care of ailing their fast-depleting environment," he added.

Easing of SBL rules sought

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS (BSP) is looking at the possibility of easing its rules for public infrastructure projects that—the single borrower's limit (SBL) to encourage private firms to invest in big-ticket projects.

"There are many big-value infrastructure projects that may be sponsored by large companies. What we are trying to explore is if we can create a separate [borrowing] limit for private infrastructure projects," BSP Deputy Governor Nestor Espenilla Jr. said Friday.

Given the huge capital required for infrastructure projects, private firms seeking loans would then really breach banks' SBL.

Under existing rules, a bank may lend to a single borrower only up to 25 percent of its unimpaired funds.

The limit was put in place to prevent a bank from becoming overly-exposed to a single borrower, which may cause big solvency problems if the borrower defaults.

Espenilla said the BSP has requested the banking industry's concerns over the SBL given developments involving mergers of large companies.

He said, however, that the BSP has to be careful in relaxing the SBL given the need to protect banks from high risk exposure.

GMA 7's IPO-funded capex hit ₱1.3B in 2009

Facilities upgrade to strengthen TV, radio signals

By Dinah L. Lucas

GMA NETWORK INC. IS SPENDING its expansion capex which the company had planned to finance with the proceeds of its initial public offering (IPO) last year.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, GMA Network said it had in the spent ₱1.336 billion in capital expenditures, or 87 percent of the ₱1.536 billion it had budgeted from the proceeds of its mid-2007 share sale.

Since then, GMA Network has spent ₱373 million for the construction of two new studios at its Quezon City compound, plus ₱192 million for the upgrade of its facilities that was meant to strengthen its television and radio signals.

GMA Network is the country's second largest broadcast company in terms of market capitalization and nationwide reach after ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. Through its flagship GMA 7 television station, it leads in the crucial Metro Manila market where consumers account for about 76 percent of the media company's operating revenue.

In its report to the bourse, GMA Network said that funds were allocated for the upgrade of its facilities in Naga, General Santos City, Bongao, Zamboanga, Mount Isarog in Batangas, Legazpi, Cagayan de Oro, Bacolod and Iloilo.

In Naga station was the recipient of the biggest allocation with ₱63 million earmarked for the construction of a new transmitter tower.

GMA Network also spent ₱128 million for production and studio facilities in Iloilo, Dagupan, Davao, along with a ₱50 million investment for the upgrade of facilities in its head office.

The company has earmarked ₱42 million for maintenance expenses, putting its total capital expenditures so far at ₱1.58 billion since its IPO.

GMA Network said that, since then, it had spent ₱388 million to fund its retirement plan, plus another ₱200 million for the acquisition of programming rights.

EEI is 'best managed' small cap firm

PUBLICLY LISTED EEI CORP. HAS BEEN named by financial publication Asiamoney as the "best managed" company in the Philippines under the small capitalization category, the firm said.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, EEI said the award was given partly due to the performance of the firm's stock price, which has risen by more than 200 percent over the last 12 months, compared with the 57 percent increase of the PSE index over the same period.

The share price appreciation was "in stark contrast to the company's overall conservative proactive stand in spite of the financial crisis that hit the Philippine economy last year," EEI quoted Asiamoney as saying.

Listed firms with market capitalization of $300 million (about ₱16.8 billion) or less are classified as "small cap" under Asiamoney.

EEI is the country's second largest construction group. It is involved in numerous public and private infrastructure projects in the Philippines and abroad.

The company said its ambitions to grow and its aggressiveness to expand outside the Philippines are what led to a "successful year" for the firm.

"Bagging a $191-million petrochemical project in Saudi Arabia and a $112-million electromechanical project in Qatar are few of the fruits of the company's efforts in growing its overseas operations," the firm told the bourse.

Despite the economic downturn of the year, the diversified investment of the company was achieved by its ability to capitalize on the opportunities abroad, especially in the Middle East—and to the oil and gas sector rather than in the weaker property industry—and, thus, make up for the weakness of the local market.

Asiamoney is a monthly financial publication that provides reporting and analysis of financial and investment matter issues for capital issuers, borrowers, institutional investors and policymakers in the Asia-Pacific region. — Dinah L. Lucas

Ramon Ang makes it to WSJ's elite list

SAN MIGUEL CORP. PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER Ramon S. Ang has been included in an elite "power list" that includes investors and philanthropist Warren Buffet and leaders of some of Asia's top corporations.

In its Jan. 1, 2010 issue, in a full-page feature entitled "The Power List: Year in Review," the Wall Street Journal Asia named Ang as one of the "30 top business leaders who made headlines in 2009 as major global and regional media."

Ang, credited with engineering the food and beverage conglomerate's diversification into oil, power, telecommunications, refineries, infrastructure, and banking, is the only Filipino business leader in the list.

"Ang and San Miguel chairman and CEO Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. have led an aggressive spree of late by Philippine-based brewer seeks a broader presence in everything from telecommunications to refineries," the Wall Street Journal said.

"We appreciate the recognition. It's an honor," said Ang. "We hope that this helps our Asian neighbors and the rest of the world realize that there are many positive developments and exciting business opportunities in the Philippines," he added.

The list includes Berkshire Hathaway chair and CEO Warren E. Buffet, one of most successful investors in history; Toyota Motor president Akio Toyoda; HSBC Holdings group chair Stephen Green; Temasek Holdings executive director and chief executive Ho Ching, and Lee Hsien Loong, prime minister of Singapore.

ANG

Range-bound . . .

Pertaining to B1

as shown by the listless activity experienced by the market in the first trading week of 2010.

"Investors are wondering what will happen in 2010," the online broker said in a research note to clients. "However, it is too early to attach any conviction to this."

In particular, AB Capital said, all eyes will be glued on developments leading up to the May national elections, along with the health of the economy and performance of listed firms.

"While the upcoming elections are expected to run smoothly ... The economic initiatives of the eventual winner will provide a clearer picture of where the economy will be headed," it explained.

Last week, the PSE index posted a gain of 23.5 points or 0.80 percent. Trading activity was relatively light with an average of 1.72 billion shares worth ₱2.32 billion changing hands each day.

At the end of the trading week, the PSEi stood at 3,037.35.

The broker advised clients to stay on a wait-and-see mode before plunging into an uncertain market.

AB Capital positioned that this week, the PSEi could "move flat with a slight downward bias."

— Dinah L. Lucas

DTI . . .

Pertaining to B1

ment target, registering a 13.2-per cent growth in approved investments for the year.

According to data from Pesa, the number of approved projects for the year reached 582, 3.14 percent lower than the 613 registered last year.

In terms of total value, however, that of the approved projects for the year was 13.9 percent better at close to ₱175.6 billion, from 2008's ₱154.4 billion.

The BOI, however, did not likely meet its 2009 target. Final figures, however, have yet to be divulged by the agency.

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Millers: Importation not the solution

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE PHILIPPINE SUGAR Millers Association Inc. (PHILMA) said importing sugar would not pull down local retail prices of the sweet product as long as world prices remain high.

PHILMA executive director Architrandes Amorsolo said there was actually enough sugar for local consumption.

According to industry data, the Philippines has more than 400,000 tons of both raw and refined sugar as of Jan. 5.

That, Amorsolo said, was enough to serve current demand although there was room for additional sugar from industrial users.

Imports, meanwhile, are not seen to pull down sugar prices, he stressed.

The Sugar Regulatory Authority (SRA) earlier said the landed price of imported sugar would currently approximate the prevailing local retail price of P47 per kilo.

"The most important is, can you find supply [abroad]? Where will you buy? Supply is even tighter outside the country, that's exactly why world prices are going through the roof," SRA administrator Rafael L. Coscolluela told DAILY TRIBUNE.

Global rates are now at a seven-high for about two years because of shortfalls in sugarcane production worldwide.

Analysts blame the shortfall on a combination of bad weather and farmers shifting to other crops when sugar prices were low. Even if farmers shift back to sugar planting, it would take at least a year before they start producing enough quality sugar to feed the market and bring down prices anew.

DTI to millers: Export your sugar

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY (DTI) is challenging local sugar millers to just export all their outputs, as the government can already take care of domestic sugar supply, the government-to-government importation.

In an interview Friday evening, Trade Secretary Peter Favila said the planned importation would be done "immediately" through the National Food Authority to temper rising prices.

"Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap called me, saying he had already done everything possible for the sugar situation. The recommendation now is to allow importation under a tax-exempt subsidy, with SRA as the importation," he explained to reporters. "The importation will be done immediately so we can give the people sugar that they can afford."

In an earlier interview, Trade Undersecretary Zenaida Maglaya said her office had received reports that the retail price of sugar had already reached P48 a kilo where the suggested retail price for the raw sweetener was placed at only P41-P43 a kilo.

She added that sugar prices could even hit P50 a kilo if nothing would be done to relieve augment supply to stabilize prices.

But local millers said importation would not solve the current price problems. The Philippine Sugar Millers Association had earlier said that the landed prices of imported sugar would be even higher than of those milled here.

The group said the price of imported sugar could hit around P50-a-kilo, considering the government's already high price in the world market and the 39 percent tariff slapped on the product.

Despite the opposition, however, Favila said the government would still go ahead with the plan to import sugar.

"[The local producers] said there was no problem with supply, so why are prices still high? If there's no supply problem, then what we have is a price problem. We want to order that no consumers can buy affordable sugar," he said.

"They say would market prices are high. That's why we're going to do a government-to-government transaction with a tax-exempt subsidy. We did it before with rice, we can do it again with sugar. If they want, they can just export all of their sugar. Oops and I will take care of local supply," he added.

Napocor seeks partners for SPUG projects

By Gerry R. Baviera

STATE-RUN NATIONAL POWER CORP. (Napocor) is in negotiations with six companies for the joint implementation of renewable energy projects for the power firm's small power utilities group (SPUG).

Napocor president Nicolas A. Tanjuatco identified these companies as Sta. Clara Power Corp., Rizal Electric Power Corp., Hopkol, PSOC Incorporation Corp., Interface, Greengate Corp. and the joint venture of Paris-Manila Technology Corporation (Symmetrel and Metphil Inc.) and Pacific Hydro.

According to Tanjuatco, these companies have already met with Napocor and are jointly exploring opportunities for investments and cooperation in the use of renewable energy in SPUG areas.

SPUG is Napocor's missionary electrification arm, providing electricity to remote islands and far-flung, inland barangays that are not connected to any of the main grids. The government, through Napocor, subsidizes the cost of power in SPUG, formerly amounting to P6 billion yearly.

The government has been tapping private companies jointly under prospective resource areas and/or to invest in the production of power from renewable energy, which can be supplied to the SPUG areas.

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Gov't moves to make insurance affordable

By Konrad W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT WILL launch on Jan. 28 a regulatory framework that will make insurance products and services more affordable to the poor.

According to the Department of Finance, the initiative will kick off through the campaign "*Mag-insurance para protektado*" (Be insured, get insured).

Spelled out in a paper titled National Strategy and the Regulatory Framework for Microinsurance, the government's initiative is to create a public awareness, especially among the poor, on the importance of getting risk protection through microinsurance.

The International Labor Organization defines microinsurance as a means to protect poor people against risks like accidents, illness, death in the family and natural disasters, in exchange for insurance premiums that are tailored to their needs, income and level of risk.

Private groups are encouraged to take part in these efforts since the strategy calls for insurance firms to complement the products being provided by the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. or PhilHealth.

The strategy and the regulatory framework was finalized and approved in December following a series of nationwide consultations made last year.

The thrust of making microinsurance a mainstream product was first expounded in Insurance Memorandum Circular No. 9-2008 signed in October 2008.

However, the Philippine Insurers and Reinsurers Association (PIAI) has called on the government to cut taxes on the industry, saying the high cost of insurance will prevent mass adoption of such products.

Peso among least volatile in '09

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE PHILIPPINE PESO WAS ONE OF THE least volatile of the 15 selected major currencies in 2009.

This, monetary officials said, kept the impact of the global crisis from severe on exporters and Filipinos dependent on remittances.

According to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, volatility of the peso stood at 1.51 percent in 2009, the second least volatile after the 0.66 percent of the Chinese yuan among 15 selected currencies.

Volatility is a measure of the extent of fluctuation of a currency. Monetary officials said volatility was preferred to be kept minimal, explaining that wild fluctuations in exchange rates make it difficult for exporters and importers to plan their operational budgets. This is because their income in peso terms depends on the exchange rate.

Data from the BSP showed the volatility of the following currencies in 2009: Japanese yen, 3.4 percent; Thailand baht, 2.49 percent; euro, 3.14 percent; Indonesian rupiah, 6.17 percent; Korean won, 7.41 percent; Singapore dollar, 3.22 percent; Taiwan dollar, 4.19 percent; British pound, 5.96 percent; Australian dollar, 11.68 percent; Malaysian ringgit, 3.59 percent; New Zealand dollar, 12.18 percent; Philippine peso, 1.51 percent; Chinese Yuan, 0.66 percent.

The foreign currencies selected for comparison of their volatilities are those of countries *that serve as the Philippines' trading partners*.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said it was the central bank's policy to keep the peso value market determined. However, he said the BSP intervened in the foreign exchange market from time to time to avoid too much volatility of the local currency.

He said the BSP was not in favor of a strong or weak peso, but that it aimed to temper short-exchange rate fluctuations.

The peso averaged $7.26 against the US dollar in January 2009 and at 46.92 in December 2009.

Micro housing loans pushed

From page B-6

quacy ratio (CAR), which the BSP strictly monitors.

Banks are required to maintain a CAR ...the proportion of capital against a bank's risk-exposed assets—of at least 10 percent.

The BSP said the guidelines would also provide a clear regulatory environment to address inconsistencies of some banks in extending microfinance for housing.

"With adequate and appropriate risk management measures, the product will enable institutions to appropriately service the housing needs of those who are unable to access traditional housing finance," said BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. in January-December 07%.

Tetangco added that promoting housing microfinance was a good way to help accelerate economic growth.

"As a sector, it [housing] spurs economic activity and creates employment through the multiplier effect generated in the downstream industries by the procurement of construction materials. It is therefore important to support this sector," Tetangco said.

DOTC opposes planned VAT . . .

From page B-6

The bill/SBT was received by the Bureau of Internal Revenue last month with the issuance of a revenue memorandum circular that ordered memoranda to shift out an extra 12 percent to ease the country's toll roads.

The VAT imposition and the toll increase that would have inevitably followed was supposed to take effect this year, but was suffocated as a cabinet meeting in Baguio City last month.

The order is among many revenue generating measures that the DOF has been pushing in a bid to raise government collections and close the budget gap.

Following an expected P300-billion gap between state revenues and spending in 2009, the government expects a deficit of about P325 billion this year.

But officials have said this may have to be raised as the state's tax take continues to slump.

First Gen

NOTICE TO STOCKHOLDERS OF FIRST GEN CORPORATION AS OF DECEMBER 29, 2009

First Gen Corporation is offering for subscription 1,142,672,791 shares of common stock ("Rights Shares") at an offer price of Php7.00 per Rights Share to certain shareholders of record as of December 29, 2009 ("Record Date") in the proportion of 1.776 Rights Shares for every one common share held as of the Record Date.

The offer period is from January 8, 2010 to 3:00 p.m. on January 14, 2010.

The Application to Subscribe together with attachments will be mailed or delivered to certain shareholders of record as of the Record Date. The duly completed subscription documents together with a check payment representing full payment of the total subscription price should be submitted to the Receiving Agent, Banktrade Rural AG Manila Branch, located at the 23rd Floor Tower One, Philippine Stock Exchange Plaza, Ayala Triangle, Ayala Avenue, Makati City, or the Stock and Transfer Agent, Securities Transfer Services, Inc., located at the Ground Floor, Strata 2000 Building, Exchange Road corner Meralco Avenue, Pasig City, no later than 3:00 p.m. on January 14, 2010. All checks should be made payable to "First Gen Rights Offer".

Rights Shares are expected to be listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange on January 22, 2010.

THIS NOTICE IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY AND DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN OFFER TO SELL THE RIGHTS SHARES. THE OFFER IS CONTAINED IN A LETTER WITH ENCLOSED FORMS WHICH SHALL BE MAILED OR DELIVERED TO CERTAIN SHAREHOLDERS OF RECORD AS OF THE RECORD DATE.

The terms of the offer are contained in the back of the Application to Subscribe and in a Prospectus that is available at the office of the Receiving Agent and for downloading at the Philippine Stock Exchange website: www.pse.com.ph

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INFOTECH

Cellphone users want better phones

By Abigail L. Ho

IN THE MAD SCRAMBLE for consumers' limited cash, handset manufacturers have tried almost every known trick to reel in customers: space-age features, snazzy designs, catchy ad and marketing campaigns.

The race to produce the best-full, featured wireless handset has led many a cell phone vendor to neglect the most basic features that consumers look for in a phone—the actual phone features.

According to a survey of 1,200 people by market research firm In-Stat, wireless consumers are more eager to see us finding cell phones that offer better connectivity, better audio, and overall simplicity.

The numbers is not really haunting for touch screens, open operating systems, Internet access, and high-megapixel cameras. What consumers truly want is a good phone, says In-Stat analyst Frank Dickerson.

"In many cases, vendors have been so focused on making complex camera phones, music phones, or mobile Internet devices (that) they have lost sight of the fact that phone functionality is still number-one here," he said.

"How callers have an own misnomer with a finger in one ear and a cell phone pressed to the other one, desperately trying to hear a conversation? Our survey response suggests that there is an opportunity for vendors to develop phones with great audio quality, robust connectivity and antenna features that are simply easy to use," Dickerson added.

While new features and form factors will provide a competitive edge to vendors in the short-term, in-four says long-term success will depend on the integration and improved performance of existing features.

"Better displays, audio, (high-definition) video, and connectivity will command premiums in the market. Rugged phones will also become more popular. The proliferation of increasingly powerful features and multiple connectivity options is also increasing demand on batteries. Phones that are ... intelligently designed will be winners in the marketplace," In-Stat says.

According to the survey respondents, they would much rather have phones with simpler and more mainstream form factors than those with "iconic, futuristic" ones.

Features interesting to mobile phone users include dual screens, a pepper, and roll-out displays, the survey revealed.

Another significant advancement that consumers are searching out for is the integration of pico-projectors—or ultra-small projectors—into phones.

According to those polled, the "ideal phones" should have a digital camera, speaker phone features, and global positioning system.

The techiest show on earth

FOR THREE DAYS, CASINO HIGH-rollers, tourists and the party set on the strip gave way to techies, gadgetsers and morons of middle devices as Las Vegas played host to the biggest electronics show on earth.

The annual Consumer Electronics Show wound down on Sunday (Jan. 10), but the devices that were on display continued to create buzz long after they had been unpacked in their area shells.

Judging by the turnout at the events, organize pulled great things may be in store for the tech industry this year.

Here are last some of the standouts at the tech show that caught consumers' interests.

MagicJack's next great act

THE COMPANY BEHIND THE MAGICJACK, the cheap Internet phone gadget that's been heavily promoted on TV, has made a new version of the device that allows free calls from cell phones at home, in a fashion that's sure to draw protest from cellular carriers.

The new magicJack costs, without permission, radio frequencies for which cellular carriers have paid billions of dollars for exclusive licenses.

Mike Corp., which is based in Palm Beach, Florida, said at the International Consumers Electronics Show that it would start selling the device in about four months for $40, the same price as the original magicJack. As before, it will provide free calls to the US and Canada for one year.

The device is, in essence, a very small cellular tower for the home. The size of a deck of cards, it plugs into a PC, which needs a broadband Internet connection.

The device then detects when a compatible cell phone comes within it (but 21.4 meters), and places a call to it. The user enters a short code on the phone. The phone is then linked to the magicJack and, as long as it's within range—Mike said it would cover a 3,000-square-foot, or 278-sq.m, home—magicJack routes the call itself, over the Internet, rather than go through the carrier's cellular tower.

Six minutes are subtracted from the user's account with the carrier. Any extra fees for international calls are subtracted from the user's account with magicJack, said the service.

According to Mike CEO Dan Borislow, the device will connect to any phone that uses the 2GM standard, which in the United States includes phones from AT&T Inc. and T-Mobile USA.

Borislow said the device is legal because wireless spectrum licenses don't pertain to the home.

AT&T, T-Mobile and the Federal Communications Commission had no immediate comment on whether they believe the device is legal, but said they were looking into the issue.

CTIA - The Wireless Association, a trade group, said it was declining comment for now.

Some of them-hot heart of Mike's plans. AP

Samsung's complete 3d home entertainment

WITH 3D SETS AS THE GAME-CHANGING TECHNOLOGY of 2010, Samsung unveiled at this year's International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas a complete 3D home entertainment solution.

"At this year's CES, we'll unveil the future of home entertainment, starting with our innovative approach to applications and 3D," said Boo-Keun Yoon, president of Visual Display Division of Samsung Electronics, during a press conference held before the opening of the CES.

An advanced 3D television, sophisticated 3D Blu-ray players and stylish active shutter 3D glasses complete the new lineup of 3D-capable home entertainment products.

Within its high-definition 3D lineup—the flagship LED 8000, the LED 8000 and LED 7000, as well as its LCD and plasma television and Blu-ray players—Samsung pioneers to deliver the best 3D image quality.

From its crystal concepts in the past years, Samsung unveiled its latest design direction for the LED TVs, Blu-ray players and home theaters. It is the "Design Inspired by Nature" theme, which utilizes light and changes colors depending on the viewing angle.

Its next-generation Blu-ray home theater systems—the HT-C6730W (which also got the "Best of Innovations 2010" award), the HT-C7530W and the HT-C6930—will feature a new retro, no-split speaker design and Samsung's new innovative Crystal Amplifier Pro technology.

LED 8000

Go fly a helicopter with an iPhone

A COMPANY THAT MAKES WIRELESS ACCESSories for cell phone wants to add something else to the endless list of things you can do with an iPhone: fling a toy helicopter.

At the International Consumer Electronics Show, Palo Alto-based Parrot unveiled its AR.Drone—a plastic and foam helicopter that can be remotely controlled from the screen of an iPhone or iPod Touch. The copter connects to the iPhone over Wi-Fi and is equipped with a camera that streams its field of vision back to the phone.

Parrot also plans to release games that mold the real-world AR.Drone onto with "augmented reality." That means the helicopter will appear to be interacting with virtual objects like robots on the iPhone's screen. AP

Wireless tablets bridge gap between smartphones, laptops

CALL IT A "SLATE" OR CALL IT A "tablet," the technology world is suddenly awash with a novel category of mobile devices seeking to grab the spotlight from a hugely anticipated product launch by Apple Inc. later this month.

Hewlett-Packard Co., Microsoft Corp., Dell Inc., Motorola Inc. and Lenovo Group Ltd. are among a barrage of companies showing off like touchscreen, multimedia devices at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas this week.

The sprawling show floor was flooded with concept devices in an array of sizes. Those wireless gadgets can stream video, download music, surf the Web and play games, aiming to win over consumers by bridging the gap between smartphones and laptops.

They are packaging for attention ahead of Apple's widely expected announcement of a 10- to 11-inch tablet computer in late January, which could redefine the category much as the iPhone did for phones.

But some analysts doubted if consumers would rise to tablets or dedicated book e-readers, smartphones and laptops of all configurations.

Gartner analyst Ken Baker is skeptical of the category as a whole, saying he doesn't understand what "mainstream" hobbies offer that would compel consumers to shell out hundreds of dollars for them.

HP, the world's largest PC maker, confirmed on Thursday that it would roll out a slate computer this year that will have multitouch capability, run Windows 7, and have Wi-Fi and 3G wireless connections.

Citing non-potential use of what he called a rich media device, Phil Mcknney, chief technology officer of HP's computer division, said HP has been working with magazine and newspaper publishers in connection with the slate. Reuters

Rise of the e-book reader

AMAZON.COM INC. POPULARIZED digital readers and galvanized a market estimated at a few million devices annually.

This week's gadget show in Las Vegas saw many new entrants to the fray.

The e-book section of CES was among the most crowded, as curious consumers and suited buyers crammed into rooms to showing plastic readers of all colors and brands.

While some e-readers, such as Plastic Logic's Que e the Hearst Corp.-backed Skiff, may wait find a niche or compete against Kindle, analysts say there's simply not enough room in the nascent market for all the new entrants.

"There are a lot of great-looking devices being shown, but right now there are too many players chasing too small a market," said Michael Gartenberg, an analyst at Interpret.

"High prices, lack of content and single-task functionality means most will fail over time."

We're seeing a lot of devices that aren't to in the market for months," said Forrester Research analyst James McQuivey.

The Kindle is widely regarded to be the market leader because Amazon not only sells the gadget, but also the digital books.

UBS estimates that Amazon sold roughly 1 million e-readers in the fourth quarter, generating revenues of $287 million out of the company's roughly $9 billion.

McQuivey expects 6 million e-readers to be sold in the United States in 2010, with Amazon and Sony leading the way. Reuters

Peftok website has new home

THE ONLY WEBSITE HONORING the Philippines' role in helping defend South Korea during the Korean War has moved to a new home at www.peftok.blogspot.com.

The updated website features more photos of the five battalion combat teams (BCTs) that served in Korea from 1950-55 as the Philippine Expeditionary Force to Korea, or Peftok.

The text has also been updated but remains a concise history of Peftok's deeds in the Korean War (1950-53), and its role in the rebuilding of South Korea from 1954-55.

Webster creator and Korean War historian Art Villanueva said the move to Blogspot was made necessary by the decaying doom in October 2009 of Geocities, the website's home since April 2000. The new website's name is "The Philippine Expeditionary Force to Korea."

"The heroism of our Korean War veterans and our country's role in rescuing South Korea from communism should be remembered, especially by younger Filipinos, and the move to Blogspot will continue to do this," he said.

"I wouldn't have been able to tell the world the story of Peftok without Geocities," Villanueva added. He credited the many e-mails he received from Peftok veterans, their families and from soldiers in some of the 15 other UN countries that fought beside Peftok who read the Geocities website.

Villanueva continues his mission of keeping alive the memory of Peftok. He was editor of two magazines about the Philippines' role in the Korean War: Honoring Democracy's Forgotten Heroes (2008) and Significant Pilgrim Battles of the Korean War (2008).

Villanueva's father, the late Johnny P. Villanueva, was a war correspondent for the Manila Evening News, the Philippine News Service, and the Agence France-Presse during the Korean War.

The elder Villanueva was conferred the Philippine Legion of Honor in Oct. 1954 for his coverage of the war, one of the first war correspondents to receive the country's highest civilian award. The website is based mostly on the elder Villanueva's memoirs.

Peftok consisted of the 10th, 20th, 19th, 14th and 2nd BCT. Some 7,200 officers and men of the Philippine Army served in Korea under the United Nations Command, defending communist North Korea's and China's attempt to conquer South Korea and turn it into a communist state.

Counted among the Filipino statistics in the Korean War are the Battle of Whalebone Surgeon, the Battle of Yultong, the Battle for Combat Outpost No., 8 and the Battle for Christmas Hill.

Some 130 Filipinos died in the Korean War. Also 500 were wounded while 16 remain missing.

Less than 3,000 Peftok veterans are alive today.

BUSINESS

Micro housing loans pushed

By Michelle V Rama

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas (BSP) has issued a circular encouraging banks to extend housing loans to small borrowers.

Under Circular No. 676, a bank involved in microfinance for at least two years may lend a maximum of P500,000 for house construction and lot acquisition, and P150,000 for house improvements and repairs.

The maximum tenor is 15 years for house construction and lot acquisition, and five years for home improvement and repairs.

To qualify for a microfinance housing loan, the borrower must be able to put up collateral worth at least P150,000.

To encourage banks to extend the microfinance loans, the BSP will consider these loans as alternative compliance to the law requiring banks to set aside a quarter of their loan portfolio for the agriculture sector.

Also, extending this type of loan, if backed by a government guarantee, will not pull down the bank's capital adequacy ratio.

MORE: B7

DOTC opposes planned VAT on highway fees

By Paolo G. Montecillo

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSportation and Communications (DOTC) is opposed to the plan to tax highway fees, saying it would needlessly burden motorists.

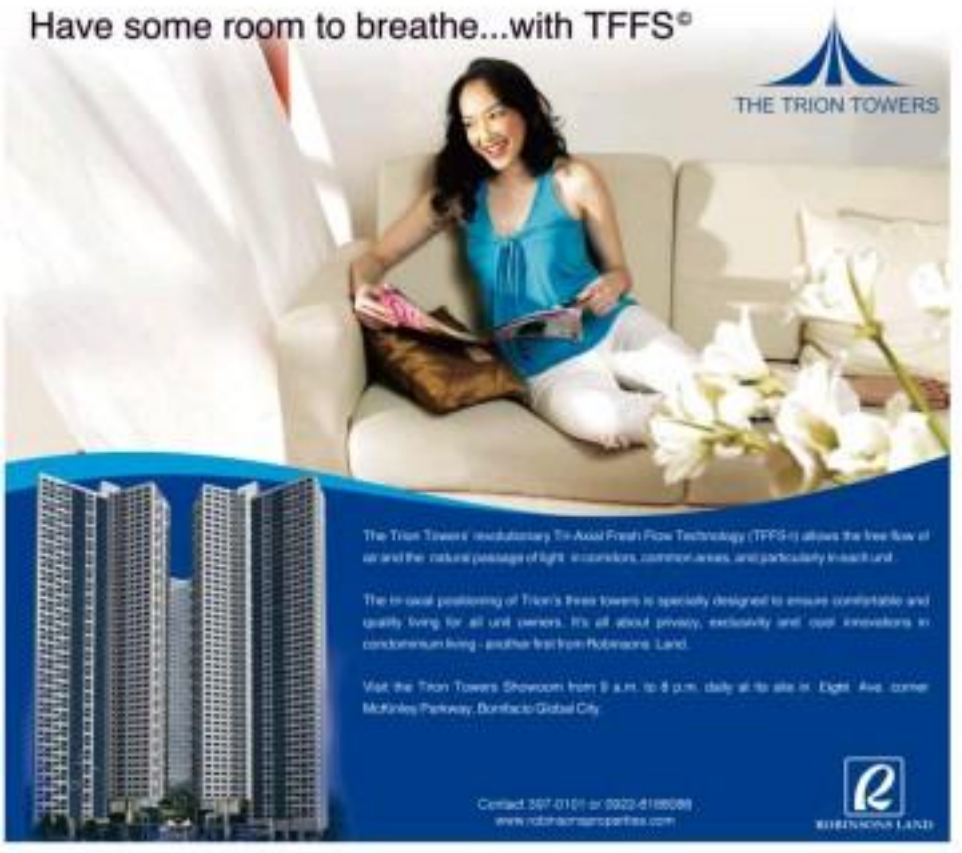
But Transport Secretary Leandro Mendoza said that if the move to drop a 12-percent value-added tax (VAT) on highway fees would be deemed legal, then the department would have no choice but to order its implementation.

"The TRB (Toll Regulatory Board) and the BOT (Department of Finance) are going to have a meeting regarding the legality of the VAT on toll," Mendoza said.

"But what some people are arguing is, toll is already a form of tax so you can't tax it again," he added.

The plan to impose a 12-percent VAT on toll was delivered by Mendoza during the second time last week, following a similar decision in 2005, to avoid putting undue burden on motorists.

MORE: B7



BUSINESS Monday

Integrity, service come to save the day

Exceeding customers' expectations key to long-term success in business

By Lilia Bonongan-Abrenz
Contributor

BUSINESS COMPETITION HAS BECOME fiercer in these trying times. Production and sales are down. Consumer spending has declined and business is not about to turn around soon.

In the grand scheme of things, most business organizations and leaders are hell-bent on "winning", even if they have to lay-off a large number of employees, accept bids at below-market value, or cut corners. They will not think twice about getting caught with hands in the cookie jar.

The business model most of these organizations use, says Ken Baker Smothers, a senior consultant of Higher Ground Consulting Group, LLC, a company working with leaders whose vision is to inspire, is that which competes for customer and clients by creating the most transactions through a variety of marketing and advertising techniques—doing what they can to meet expectations.

Service

"Building a relationship by exceeding the expectations of our customers is a far better solution. It means putting others (employees, customers and vendors) ahead of ourselves," advises Smothers.

He says those organizations or companies find business success and create competitive advantage from a willingness to do the right things and create innovative products and exceptional interactions with their loyal customer base.

Congruence

Doing the right things may be quite difficult, but not impossible.

Eric Goggins, writing for the website inde181.com, says corporate integrity can be maintained even if an enterprise is struggling to survive.

"Integrity is one trait that will bring clients back for many years. It is being the same on the inside and the outside in a lawful and ethical manner. It is bringing thoughts, words and actions into total congruence. In business, this means that one's word is his or her bond...does is, he or she delivers on what is promised on time," he says.

Goggins poses this challenge to business owners and leaders by asking them these questions: "Leaders are sometimes have to throw the ideals out the window in order to continue operations in economic downturns? How does an entity maintain ethical standards in tough economic times?"

He lists these useful tips:

1. Write out a clearly defined ethical statement.

Goggins says corporate and business leaders should not wait until the pressure is on to establish guidelines on how to conduct business and should lay the non-negotiables down. "These nonnegotiable principles should be clearly stated with very little room for ambiguity. A company leader who sets these absolute principles and practices them on a regular basis will be less likely to forego these principles in front of economic hardship," he explains.

2. Model the ideal ethical standard.

Goggins says if the head of an organization or enterprise operates from a double standard, the staff will think the ethical statement is meaningless and will do business as it seems best to them. He says instances of inconsistency in regard to making decisions, for example, are seen by clients as a lack of integrity and cause a loss of trust between the company and its clientele.

3. Hire employees who agree with corporate standards.

Goggins quotes Larry Suddell, author of "Business Ethics—Walk The Walk": "Take pains to find people who are a good ethical match to your company."

4. Reinforce the ethical guidelines through creative reminders.

Goggins shares Suddell's suggestion to run employees through a thorough orientation program and find creative ways to constantly remind them of the company's ethical guidelines.

5. Enforce violations swiftly but justly.

Goggins laments the fact that organizations often make a big deal of their ideals but fail to follow up on infractions. "Such a lack of follow-through tells other employees that management is not serious about corporate policies. When corporate leaders act swiftly and appropriately in such unethical (misconduct is, punish only those involved, then all the employees will know that the ethical standards are real and will act accordingly," he says.

6. Set up mechanisms for accountability.

A business owner or corporate leader, says Goggins, should keep each practice, activity and transaction down his or her route in check. "Unfortunately, the term 'accountability' has been given a bad

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Who will speak for the people?

THE GLOBAL SIGNS OF growth in the financial markets are around us.

Dow says there are just in the United States, but also in the Philippines.

And those who play big money in the financial markets never had it so good.

Financial market indices

Less than a year ago, the Dow index registered a low of 6,469.95. As of Wednesday last week, it closed at 10,377.26, an increase of more than 60 percent.

This means a person who placed his $1 million at the low index will see his wealth balloon to $1.63 million in less than a year.

For the same period, the S&P 500 index registered a low of 666.79.

As of Wednesday last week, it closed at 1,139.16, a rise of more than 70 percent.

The NASDAQ index registered a low of 1,265.52 less than a year ago.

As of Wednesday last week, it closed 2,361.71, an exhilarating growth of more than 86 percent.

The only teasing meant a lot to Margie, now 52 and general manager of North MRT Ventures, a Goodyear Servitek outlet on Sgt. Rivera Street, Quezon City that has been a Goodyear partner for 60 years.

"The dawn of North MRT ventures in small distribution and our first account," Margie says. "My grandfather started a gasoline business with Caltex, where he handled a fleet of trucks. Eventually he went into tire trading."

Joining a Chinese family-run business was a big challenge for Margie.

Restructuring

"I restructured the organization and placed a system of checks and balances. Chinese businesses are traditionally run by a single person on whose decision everything depends."

Margie instituted changes that followed distinct tasks to clearly defined.

"We now have a corporate and professional setup," Margie explains. "I also initiated changes which led to the computerization of our files and to having corporate meeting sessions for our employees."

These changes were not won easily. "When your bosses are your parents," recalls Margie, "it is quite difficult to suggest change, especially when you are young and new to the business."

So, how did she clear that hurdle?

Support

"I learned to compromise," she says.

"Throughout the years, Goodyear has provided numerous programs, from local initiatives to national programs that have helped secure growth for our business. Goodyear's unwavering support in the form of training is something that I appreciate very much. The thorough training we get is not only for business owners, but the business staff as well," she adds.

Margie also counts among Goodyear's strong points its "great product range, and commitment to innovation."

When asked what her advice would be for other second-generation Goodyear dealers, Margie says: "You have to be passionate, especially about innovation. I think that one has to be innovative in order to last in the (tire) industry."

Another second-generation Goodyear dealership owner is 28-year-old Ma. Eugenia "Dee" Ilan Aguirre-Aguilloz.

Dee is chief operations officer of H&I Group of companies. Her family has been in the tire industry for 50 years and a Goodyear partner for 15 years.

"H&I Group of Companies is engaged in wholesale and retail trading of tires," explains Dee. "In Bicutan, we have outlets, five of which are in Iloilo City and one each in Roxas, Roxas City and San Jose, Antique. In Ilagan, we have two outlets—in Isabela City and Tuguegarao City."

Dee's parents, Rolando and Virginia, started the dealership 30 years ago, and Dee joined the company after she passed the Accountancy board exams four years ago.

"We are all CPAs in the family, and we are all entrepreneurial," Dee says. "When I was a student, I spent my summer vacation in my parents' office, working in the accounting department."

Dee officially entered the family business when she turned 21.

"I started at the bottom of the organization, and that's how I learned how to blend in with other employees and how to deal with different customers," says Dee. "I had to learn a lot about customer behavior. I also needed to study all our products so I would be more confident in front of customers and business partners."

"When I moved up to become sales agent, I used my knowledge to supervise the business and establish department, like marketing and logistics."

Financial statements

She created an operations manual to enhance efficiency and instituted the use of financial statements as a basis for making decisions.

"I needed to explain to everyone in the company the importance of quantifying everything so that we can all flexibly consider inventory and sales volumes."

Her Gen, the 12-year partnership with Goodyear especially benefited H&I in terms of technology that improved operational efficiency.

"Goodyear also conducted trainings in sales, marketing, and even business etiquette, all of which, at one point, offered second-generation dealership managers edutelainge to attain Institute of Management to learn more about retail management."

Her advice to other second-generation Goodyear partners?

"Start at the bottom of the company, learn from your mistakes, and consult your parents."

MAPping THE FUTURE

Name of Author

First, it should be evident by now that the growth of financial markets does not connect with the real economy.

US Treasury Secretary and Fed Reserves Chair Bernanke should get A+ ++ for spectacular performance in turning around the financial markets in less than a year!

But their concern is to grasp in the dark in handling the real economy where most people belong.

Second, it should be evident by now that the medicine that cures financial markets ailment does not work for the real economy.

US Treasurer Geithner and US Fed Chair Bernanke may be excellent doctors for the financial markets but their cure-all cures interest rates, ballooning debts, inflation-rate tinkering do not nudge the economy back to life and they continue to be at a loss in reversing the ailment of the real economy where most of the people belong.

Third, it is time that neoliberties in government and industries realize that the way to go, as it has been in past centuries, is to take care first of the development of the real economy and growth in the financial markets follows.

The raison d'être of financial markets is to serve the real economy.

The promotion of the interests of the real economy takes precedence over the financial markets.

It is not the other way around.

This paradigm is explained in detail in an Oct. 12, 2008 PDI article titled, "Financial Markets: Where to now?", found in http://business.inquirer.net/money/view/20081012-164862/Financial-markets-Where-to-now.)

The rich and powerful

This paradigm is fixed in Washington these days by finance and great authority.

After all, the fruit of persuasive influence and authority is wealth possession and, since such wealth is accumulated, it is often placed in the hands of financial markets operators for multiplication.

Unfortunately, most people are not influential.

Most people do not hold high authority or pedigree that produces wealth so considerable that it is placed in the hands of fund managers in stock markets, commodities markets, foreign exchange markets and even also consumer derivatives markets.

Because most people are not wealthy and powerful, we rarely read articles that differentiate between the financial markets where the hands of the rich and powerful are placed and the real economy where most people belong.

Because most people do not have such wealth and power, we do not read news on the prosecution of their interests while we are bombarded with news that promote the interests of financial markets.

Who will speak for the people? Who should stand up for them?

Fed Chair Bernanke, Treasury Secretary Geithner and President Obama, of course!

Karl Marx and the people

Let me just touch on a little history.

In the book, The Communist Manifesto, Karl Marx claims that man's history is marked by class struggles...freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, etc.

Under the condition of capitalism, class division has taken the form of struggle between the capitalist or bourgeoisie which owns the means of production and the working class or proletariat which labors for wages.

In Marx's view, the capitalists exploit the working class for its cheap labor.

I have no liking for the books of Karl Marx. In my view, his philosophy is rather full of drama and conflict while I aim for simplicity and cooperation.

But the history of capitalism is now entering a new leaf in the second millennium.

Our past shows capitalism and labor working together to building the economy.

Now on the other side there is Main Street, the real economy, composed of capitalists and labor and on the other side lies Wall Street—the financial markets composed of fund managers and investment bankers controlling trillions of dollars from the savings of the real economy entrusted in their hands.

There need not be a class struggle between the two.

But the financial markets must know why they exist; they must see main money as the expense of the real economy.

Also, government must stand for the people.

If not, with the power and wealth that Wall Street holds in its hands, who will speak for the people?

(The article reflects the personal opinion of the author and not the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. The writer is an entrepreneur and author of the books "The Penis Enlarger Hour: Why Are We In Fear?" and "The Philippine Economy: 10 Our Leaders Have A Chat?" Feedback at bsp@philbusinessnet.com.ph. For previous articles, please visit map.org.ph.)

Goodyear dealers ably steer wheel of fortune

WHEN MARGIE DING WAS A child, she would go to her parents' warehouse or office on weekends and summer vacations.

"We were never ordered by our parents to go there," Margie says. "But we always went and learned to watch the cash register."

The early training meant a lot to Margie, now 52 and general manager of North MRT Ventures, a Goodyear Servitek outlet on Sgt. Rivera Street, Quezon City that has been a Goodyear partner for 60 years.

"The dawn of North MRT Ventures is small distribution and our first account," Margie says. "My grandfather started a gasoline business with Caltex, where he handled a fleet of trucks. Eventually he went into tire trading."

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Integrity, service ...

From page B1-1

name to recent times and often produces images of overbearing managers micromanaging everything and everyone," he says.

"The process of accountability should enable an organization to avoid unnecessary mistakes that could damage the company's reputation for the short and long term," he says. "A fair system of accountability should keep a company's products and services in line with performance and standards of excellence regardless of the prevailing economic environment."

MOVEMENTS

Ogilvy appoints CEO

Steve Dahlitz, Managing Director of Ogilvy PR's Global Strategy+Planning Group, has been appointed Regional CEO of Ogilvy PR Asia Pacific, succeeding Christopher Graves. Graves was named Global CEO of the international public relations agency effective January 2010.

In his new role, he will have overall responsibility for the firm's Asia Pacific business, spanning more than 30 offices in Asia, India, Southwest Asia and Australia.

New DOE official named

The Department of Energy has recently welcomed its new undersecretary, Mary Rose Magsaysay-Orbos-ene, to its roster of officials, following the signing of her appointment last month. She replaced former Energy Undersecretary Mike Rabago.

Prior to her designation at the DOE, Orbos-ene worked with the Zamboanga Tourism Council. Magsaysay International Human Resources Inc., Zapatos Shell S/S, Pure Electric, Pure-Gold Development Corp., Bombi of Canada, and Toyota Shaw Accessories Inc. She also served as the campaign manager of former Sen. Vicente P. Magsaysay.

Orbos-ene graduated from the University of the Philippines Diliman with a degree in Tourism. She completed her graduate studies under the same institution with concentration on Public Administration.

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NED ROBERTO, Ph. D.
- Author of 10 bestselling marketing books and widely read columnist of Inquirer's Marketing Biz
- 1st marketing co-author of Philip Kotler in Asia-Pacific
- Widely acknowledged as the marketing research guru of the Philippines with master and doctorate in marketing research from Nebraska

FRANCIS KONG
- Author of 10 bestselling inspirational books and widely read columnist of Star's Business Matters Beyond The Bottom Line
- The leading motivational speaker in the Philippines
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BUSINESS Monday

Outsourcing of payroll: A complex feast

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By Jessie C. Carpio
Contributor

NECESSARY AS IT IS, PAYROLL is not always something that payroll preparers look forward to working on. This bi-monthly computation of employees' salaries, bonuses and deductions is seen as a tedious, repetitive task that can get more complicated than some might think.

At the heart of it, payroll processing involves two kinds of data: information about employees that doesn't change on a regular basis—such as employee number, basic salary rate and tax status—which is known as the master file; and information that changes every pay period—such as overtime pay, leave and advances—which make up the data file.

Simple enough? Maybe.

What if the payroll preparer receives the data file late? Employees still have to be paid on schedule, so the preparer has no choice but to rush the payroll processing, which sometimes leads to errors in computations.

Stress

In the end, employees are irked over their incorrect net pay and payroll preparers get stressed trying to correct their botched work.

There is also the detailed accumulations process for taxes and preparation of schedules of remittances to government agencies.

Again, preparers in an payroll preparer to

More RP firms hiring others to do tedious task

make accurate computations as the employees will not incur tax deficiencies or excesses at year end.

So while payroll processing may seem easy, the sheer volume of data and the attention need for accuracy makes it a complex and sensitive activity.

This is why many businesses have opted to outsource their payroll functions.

Nowadays, outsourcing your payroll functions is like dining at a restaurant.

You may choose to have only an entrée, or you can go the whole nine yards and sample every course available.

Large banks, for example, have been handling their payroll processing with their **clients** services as part of their come-ons for customers to open accounts with them.

These banks can take on a business' entire payroll function—from processing the payroll monthly, to filing the necessary returns with the government agencies and remittances of employees' income taxes.

There is a catch, though: Clients are expected to maintain a certain amount of deposits with the bank to continue enjoying the payroll processing service.

Effectively, the lower interest rate financiers the cost of payroll processing.

"Tell-water-as-a-service," or Inail, is another option available to businesses that are interested in outsourcing.

In this case, you engage a software provider to do your payroll. You simply submit your payroll data to the software professionals for encoding.

Upfront cost

On the plus side, this arrangement minimizes a company's upfront cost of investing in software. But responsibility over the corrections of the payroll computation still rests with the company.

Moreover, the Inail option usually doesn't include filing of tax returns and other things with government agencies. These, as well as the reconciliation, are still handled by the company.

The more traditional outsourcing provider offers a more extensive menu of services.

Usually, the outsourcing provider owns the payroll software that it uses to process the payroll of all its clients; manages the master file and ensures that updates are effected; encodes the payroll data changes relative to the payroll computation; and reviews and checks the resulting payroll computations.

Accreditation

The provider handles the monthly and annual filings with the government agencies. Also, the provider takes care of the difficult process of reconciliation.

In short, the provider does the whole payroll process and filings.

Payroll outsourcing has evolved over time.

Companies seeking to outsource their payroll processing have also become more sophisticated and demanding.

More than the cost, these companies are looking for providers that can guarantee the complete and accurate computation of their payroll, that value confidentiality and security of their payroll information, and that are responsive to their requests and concerns.

In the search for the service provider that promises all of this and more, these companies continue to sample what the market has to offer, much like a guest at a restaurant: a taste of this, a taste of that, before finally committing to a "course" that is exactly right.

(The author is a partner with the Business Support Services Division of audit, tax and business advisory firm Punongbayan & Araullo.)

Stocks looking good in 2010

THE STOCK MARKET WILL CONTINUE TO offer opportunities in 2010 to those who are prepared to take advantage of pullbacks and corrections.

COL Financial Group, Inc. (COL) research head April Tee explained, "We don't expect the stock market to move up in a straight path in 2010. Valuations for a number of stocks are no longer attractive, while earnings growth momentum has yet to return to pre-financial crisis levels. This could then generate choppy and consolidating action in the near year."

"In early 2009, all stocks were trading at bargain levels since investors sold indiscriminately due to concerns over the possible impact of the global financial crisis. However, following the market's strong rebound in 2009, many stocks are trading at fair valuations which could limit upsides and provide windows for pullbacks," she said.

Jessie Barreto, COL vice-president, added that the odds of a continuous rally, without a profit taking wave, are not favorable given the index's 60 percent rise in 2009. Barreto considers the market to be "overbought" and looks for corrections to provide better buying opportunities.

Tee advised investors to focus on remaining stocks that continue to trade at attractive valuations.

These include Manila Water (MWC), Bloomberg Development Corp. (BDC), First Gen Corporation (FGEN), First Holdings (FPH) and SM.

She also shares the view that corrections should be viewed as opportunities to buy stocks for the market's next leg up.

"We don't expect prices to return to March 2009 lows, given that we've already seen the worst. The market will eventually go up given the impending economic recovery and that a rally we accustomed to worsen to buy during corrections in 2010. However, the next major upturn might take some time given that the global economy has yet to absorb all the excesses that led to the global financial crisis," she said.

The upcoming elections will also provide support for the stock market, according to Nikko Bara, president of Orient Online. "Powerful and orderly national elections are likely to usher in a new period of optimism and hope, as the country's newly chosen leader could implement reforms that will sustain the sustainability of the country's economic growth," he said.

For more information on COL's market outlook for 2010, sign up for a free COL online account at www.colonline.com or call 6.318.8777 or sign up for their free seminar on the stock market.)

LIFESTYLE Arts&Books
Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan Arts and Books Editor Lito B. Zulueta

FR. PEDRO Galende, OSA, and Maita Maronilla-Reyes

Gently undoing the ravages of time at San Agustin Museum

Chemist and art restorer Maita Maronilla-Reyes has developed a technology to restore ancient documents and artworks

By Ross Harper Alonzo
Contributor

THE CHURCH OF San Agustin inside the walled city of Intramuros is a monument to the Spanish colonization of the Philippines. It is the first religious structure built in the island of Luzon, after the Spanish relocated from the Visayas. Its museum is proud of its collection of ecclesiastical art and regalia illustrating the history of the monastery and its order.

A conservation laboratory occupying a large room on the second floor of the massive church was established in 2003 by museum director Fr. Pedro Galende, OSA, with the help of chemist and conservator Maita Maronilla-Reyes. It was meant to oversee the conservation needs of the museum's own books and painting collection, but eventually it became a room between an art laboratory with a social advocacy and a training venue for art owners who want to learn do-it-yourself methods under the guidance of experienced staff.

On a winding afternoon, the San Agustin Conservation Laboratory is quiet, almost primordial, with just a handful of people, some of them teenagers working on various artworks. At 8 x 6-ft painting of a religious figure belonging to the museum is propped against the wall but it is a 4- to 5-month Antonello masterpiece that is most striking. The painting belongs to Dr. Jose dos Passod, a physician of the National Arts.

"It was a gift from Antonello after I wound him," says Pascual.

Soon in her life, she tried her every detail of the painting and it was given to her just a few years ago. "He called the painting 'Harvest Time' because it was the season for watermelons in Pampanga. Antonello knew watermelons were my favorite fruit and he painted me sticking on the end, his wife slicing something close to him with

(BEHOLD C2)

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International experts featured in Manila symposium on green architecture

'Asia is poised to host a generation of green cities'

By Walter Ang
Contributor

TWO INTERNATIONAL authorities in environmental urban design will speak in a national architecture symposium "Asian Green Cities: Visions of the Modern World," organized by the University of Santo Tomas.

Jon Yeang, urban planner and director of London-based firm Llewelyn Davies Yeang, and Darko Radovic, academic scholar from Keio University and Tokyo University in Japan and University of Melbourne in Australia, will discuss global concerns and practices related to sustainability and eco-municipalizing and how these can be applied in Asian cities.

The conference is organized by Architecture Network (Archinet), the UST College of Architecture's student organization. It will be held at the UST Medicine Auditorium.

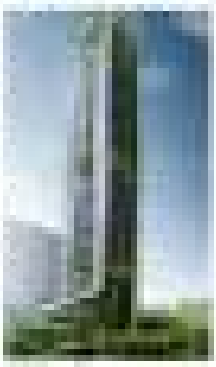
"Asia is poised to host a generation of green cities that will current the paradigm of industrial-era planning," says John Nicholas Ibarra, head of the Ibarra Architecture Studio and faculty adviser of Archinet. "Our Asian neighbors are already embracing sustainable features in their design process. However, the Philippines still espouses design and planning principles influenced by the old ways of the western

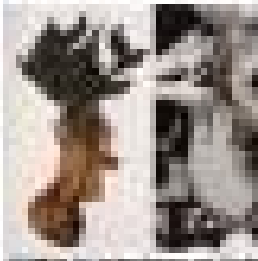
INTERNATIONAL C2

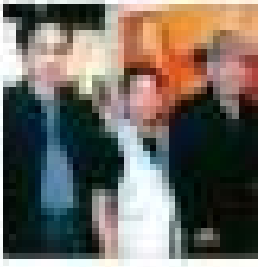
KEN Yeang

DARKO Radovic

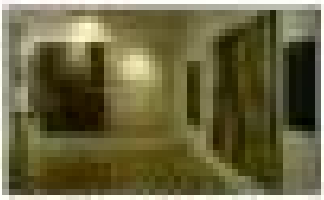
International experts featured in Manila symposium on green architecture

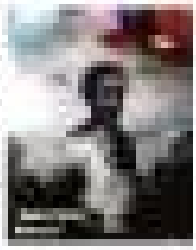


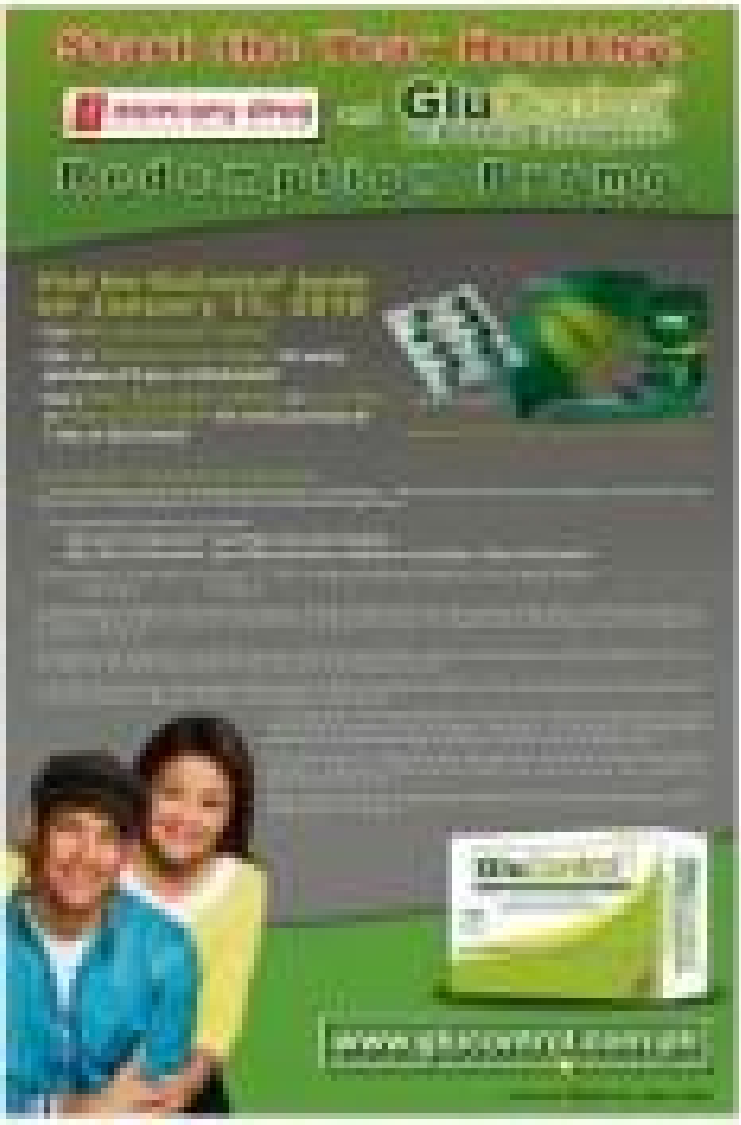




Gently undoing the ravages . . .






www.glucovance.com.ph

Galerie Joaquin holds eighth anniversary exhibit

THE GALERIE JOAQUIN GROUP OF Galleries marks its eighth anniversary with "Part X," which opens on Jan. 13 at 6:30 p.m. and runs until the 24th at the renovated Ni Cuisine at BBH Mogpundit.

The show features the paintings of renowned artists carried by the gallery, such as Federico Aguilar Alcuaz, Sanso, Lydia Velasco, Mavis Herbal, Dominic Rubio, Fernando Ruaco, Jasper Pernilar, Jovan Barrio, Salvador Busquilla, Jerry Miranda, Barnabas Bulayot, Edwin Tres Reyes, Josefito Dapanas, Alpo Pingol, Delfiña, Albert Limera, Vincent de Pio, Ti Jalandoni and Phil de Guzman.

It also features works from artists that the group has had the opportunity to work with through the years, such as the sculptures of Ramon Orlina, Michael Cacnio, and Daniel de la Cruz, and the paintings of Juanito Torres.

"STILL Life & Landscape," by Federico Aguilar Alcuaz

The works on exhibit give viewers a veritable treasure of the offerings Galerie Joaquin brings art collectors in the country as its Singapore branch, and in the international art fairs and auctions that the group participates in.

Below, some of the artists in the show candidly share their own statements on their art and the meanings they want to convey in their works:

Juanito Torres: "The painting depicts a chapter in 'El Filibusterismo' where the priest Isiong cursed unaffected. Simoun presents the gift of light from a lamp, which in fact, he intends to blow up the room filled with unsuspecting friars, socialites, and the Talamdador Binondo, in hopes of cleansing the nation of evil."

Jasper Pernilar: "'Bulilit' is about curiosity, the way a child looks at what an adult does and imitates it in his own way. 'Candy Cane' takes a very common element of a child's life, the obsession candy, to tell a story that literally is on the child's face—a veritable translation of the adult comment: 'Mukha kang candy!'"

Edwin Tres Reyes: "'Pinapanday' presents an environmentalist way of showing how one can harness the capacity of the female for doing good or evil."

Alpo Pingol says his paintings are attempts at "visual poetry" expressing inner meanings. "Nothing is achieved in art by willpower alone. Everything is done through total submission to a higher being. You only are instruments when I paint."

Raffaello Ramos: "I use the figures and drapery in my paintings to communicate with my viewers. I want to elicit their responses to the colors and images in the work, their subconscious reactions to the colors red, blue and green, which I use."

Vincent de Pio's love series features women gently playing newspapers. "I am imagining myself at the age of my subjects. They show my happy-go-lucky side, my current state of mind, my positive outlook in the face of adversity."

Josefito Reyeres: "I call my paintings modern impressions; my friend and mentor calls this my own brave New World, which I paint as a journey away from harsh realities and the cursory difficulties of life and into a colorful world full of hope."

The exhibit is a joint project of Galerie Joaquin Silom, Galerie Provenza, Galerie Joaquin Podium, Galerie Raphael, Galerie Stephanie, Galleria Nordica and Galerie Joaquin Singapore. Call 8357519 0570 or 8357520 0433 or visit www.galeriejoaquin.com.

"El Fili," by Juanito Torres

"Candy Cane," by Jasper Pernilar

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Visual Arts

From page C3

11, 6 p.m. It takes a fitful approach to distraction and the act of looking. The opening will feature a panel discussion, with Ambeth Ocampo of Focus on the Global South, sponsored by Globe Commons Foundation. A gallery walk will be led by Ombawa and Dizon on Jan. 15, 1 p.m. Call 908 807, 908 926 (telefax), 0905-8601909, E-mail rangjan.museum@gmail.com. Visit www.rangjanmuseum.org.

De la Rosa artist-siblings at Waterfront Cebu

Hector de la Rosa and sister Rhea will present their latest works in the exhibit "In Honor to the Heart of Gerlyn Inc. Nifio de Cebu" Jan. 12 at the lobby of Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casino, Salinas Drive, Lahug, Cebu City (tel. (032) 2309888 loc. 8035; e-mail sohector08@yahoo.com). The show runs until Feb. 10.

"Bird Have Prairie," by Rhea de la Rosa

LIFESTYLE Arts&Books

UST Conservatory to tackle opera, Broadway

JM Francisco/file

By Amadis Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

GET A GAGGLE OF PROMISING as well as promising conservatory-trained singers and make them perform solos, duets, quartets and even scenes from famous operas. Put good measure, throw in excerpts from operettas and Broadway-West End musicals.

And—voilà—you have a quality show which will appeal to opera buffs and, as well, younger audiences (not limited to music students) who go for musicals.

This is the premise behind "Love Unspoken," a pre-Valentine concert of the University of Santo Tomas Conservatory of Music on Jan. 30-31, 8 p.m. at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

The event was announced by CCP vice president and artistic director Raul M. Sunico at a recent press conference at CCP Sunico is concurrently dean of the UST Conservatory. In the venue, instead of the grim but iconic painting "The Builders" by Hernando C. Estudes, stood the colorful "Serenata in Pink" by Danilo Dalena.

Performers include soprano Rachelle Ermillos, mezzo Clarissa Ocampo, tenors Randy Gilongo and Lemuel de la Cruz, baritone Andrew Fernando, and a galaxy of other conservatory faculty members, alumni and connecting students. There will be some 100 singers and musicians, with Herminigildo Ramos directing the UST Symphony Orchestra.

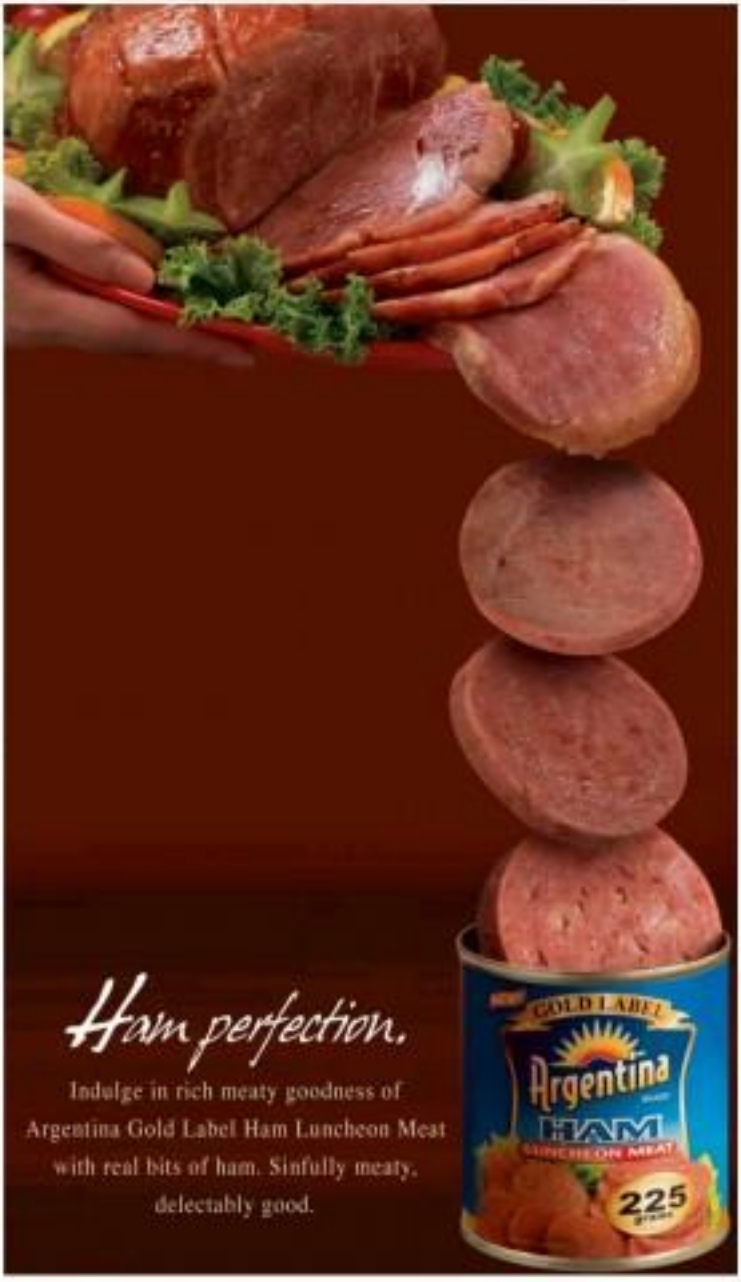
"We really have a very deep bench—vocal, symphonic and students," Sunico boasted.

The CCP concert will be repeated at UST marking 109th anniversary this month and February, which traditionally are its anniversary months. The concert is thus one of the activities in the run-up to UST's much-anticipated 400th anniversary in 2011.

Pitoy Quinton is stage director, with lighting by Raul Bernardo and set design by Nicardo Cruz. The first part will feature a Parisian-style set, while the set in the second part is semi-abstract, with panels and projections. Incidentally, "Love Unspoken," the title, is an aria from Lehar's "The Merry

UST CONSERVATORY D2

LARISSA Ocampo



Are we lagging behind in Asia's classical music scene?

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

IN THE '500 UP TO THE EARLY '70s, the Manila Symphony Orchestra was considered the best in Southeast Asia.

But in the '80s up to the present, the tuxtroubadours are the symphony orchestras in Korea, Japan, Singapore and lately the Hong Kong Philharmonic.

The San Miguel Philharmonic was on the brink of overtaking the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra in terms of musicianship, management and exposure, but it quickly faded away before one could ask for an encore.

Meanwhile, the country's leading vocal soloists — Dessie Cuizon, Andrew Fernando, Leonard de la Cruz and Rachelle Arevalus, among others) are more useful in UK, Singapore and Vienna than in Manila.

Cecile Licad was barred last year from performing in the province because of a contract with CCP which was supposed to promote democratization of the arts.

Melinda Joseph Tamilla — who will perform at the Philamlife Theater on Jan. 29 — likes to think what is happening in the music scene is reflective of the way things are managed in the country.

"What is happening in the classical music scene is a mirror of what goes on — to be greater souls... with our governments and society. If we truly love our country, we have to make sacrifices even the present conditions are not getting any better."

Tamilla was one of the celebrated violin prodigies in the late '70s in a distinguished batch of classical musicians that included Chito, Jaime and Cuky Bolipata, pianist Rowena Reyes and Licad, among others.

Aida Castilla: "Nevertheless, I am still grateful that we still have a decent house and I can move around in a modest car and have San Miguel beer in the freezer. What about those who have only have manual skills

because of poor standards of public education? This is hard to accept after living in the US for many years. I think Filipinos should not suffer in their own country."

Moreover, the violinist is happy to see that Manila still has an active classical music scene despite the difficult times.

"I'd like to give a lot of credit to local concert organizers who manage to keep music alive. However as I get older, I grow into venerable viewing a bigger picture."

He cites the fact that some 20 to 30 years ago, Filipino musicians were classical music fans to section with to the region. In 1979, his father Ipeldonan Bolipata Castilla Jr.) conducted the Philippine Youth Orchestra on a highly acclaimed tour of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore.

Tamilla-Castilla: "My Tatay was chairman of Ateneo de Manila and I studied the manners were instrumental for this orchestra's development. Tatay was the one who invited Yehudi Menuhin to conduct the orchestra during the Manila Film Festival in 1981. Menuhin was so impressed with the orchestra that he invited them to perform in Europe."

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successfully toured Europe and US under the baton of Dameon Bedrosian, an alumnus of the program, who, at barely 30 years old, was recently appointed music director of Los Angeles Philharmonic, badly out very soon. PSO has been massive since the early '90s.

"But many things have changed even to our own region. Go on the Internet and you will find big name artists from all over the world appearing regularly with world-class orchestras based in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. In Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam are catching up fast.

"All of these Asian neighbors used to look up to our classical music performances. Unfortunately, I would say that it is time for us to look beyond the borders of our country and pick where we have left off."

In Manila, Tamilla has recorded a CD of concert pieces titled "Serendipity" released by Trademark Audio label and Coreleers pare Trio for North

Philippine Daily Inquirer

Romantic comedy starts off Repertory's new season

REPERTORY'S NEW SEASON STARTS UP with the Philippine premiere of Brad Quiz's new romantic comedy, "Dusits." Billed for mid-January to the end of the month, "Dusits" is four different vignettes with four sets of characters. The play explores the hilarious nuances of love in seemingly impossible, but extremely funny situations.

Joy Virata and Miguel Faustmann take on all four sets of characters, providing rollicking entertainment as they go through emotive and character changes onstage. "Dusits" is directed by Amy Head Nuestro. Playdates are Jan. 15-16, 22-23, 29-30 at 8 p.m., with 5:30 p.m. matinees on Jan. 16-17, 23-24, 30-31.

February offers "Romeo and Bernadette," Mark Saltzman's musical romedy. Directed by Joy Virata, the story takes off from good old Shakespeare. Was thought Romeo died? Well, he didn't.

He just took a sleeping potion and wakes up on Broadway in 1960. And he doesn't fall in love with dear Juliet; instead he runs after someone he thinks is Juliet, but is not. Because she's Bernadette and she just hap-

SCENE from "Dusits"

pens to be the daughter of a local mobster.

Catch it on February 5-6, 12-13, 19-20, 26-27 at 8 p.m., with 2:30 p.m. matinees on Feb. 6-7, 13-14, 20-21, 27-28.

A mark constant to the lightness and gaiety of the first two offerings, the month of July brings "Equus," Peter Shaffer's powerful, riveting drama about the dark corners of the human psyche. This intense classic play will be performed on July 9-10, 16-17, 23-24 at 8 p.m., with 3:30 p.m. matinees on July 10-11, 17-18, 24-25.

Repertory has always had a special place for young audiences through Children's Theater. In 2010, Repertory brings the adaptation of the well-loved fairytale "Sleeping Beauty." With book, music and lyrics by Jim Ellis, this show is sure to set the hearts of everyone, old and young alike, singing to the tune of the classic "I'm In Love," "It's Lonely To Be A Troll" and "Speaking Song." "Sleeping Beauty" is set for Aug. 14-Dec. 19.

As a perfect ending to the company's season, Repertory presents "Little Women," the Louis May Alcott classic transformed into a Broadway musical, with music by Jason Howard, lyrics by Mindi Dickstein and book by Allan Knee. The story focuses on the March family — Marmee and her four girls — and is a timeless reminder of what family is truly all about.

Directed by Monsho Lauchengco-Fule, "Little Women" is set for Nov. 19-Dec. 12.

All Repertory performances are at Onstage, 2/F Greenhill 3, Pinaro de Buiancourt Legaspi St., Makati City. Call 8870718 or visit repertoryph. Tickets are also available at Ticketworld 9109999 or visit www.ticketworld.com.ph.

JOY Virata and Miguel Faustmann in "Dusits"

Dulaang UP's new Brecht production opens Feb. 17

DULAANG UP CLOSES ITS 34TH season with "Nag Ilimok nang Hindi Magaling Pagkabasi ni Arturo Ui," a contemporary Adaption of Bertolt Brecht's "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui."

Set amid the economic turmoil of the 1930's, the play chronicles the rise of Arturo Ui, a Chicago mobster, and his attempts to control the smallflower racket. Brecht intended his play to be a satirical allegory of Adolf Hitler's rise in Nazi Germany; the current past a timely spin to the play by highlighting parallelisms between that era and present-day circumstances.

Nag Ilimok Nang Hindi Magaling Pagkabasi ni Arturo Ui" is directed by Alexander Cortes. Filipino adaptation by Katherine Infante, Joshua Ito and Patrick Pidera, original music by Diwa de Leon and choreography by Denise Santos.

The show runs Feb. 17-March 7, at the Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero Theater, UP Diliman, Wednesday-Friday, 7 p.m., and on weekends, 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Established in 1976, Dulaang UP is the country's premiere academic based theater company.

Call 9906-3640830 or the Dulaang UP Office 9261349, 9818000 local 2440 or 4317500.

Digital photographs grace Bencab Museum

By Frank Cimatu
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—Great artists traversed thirty years. Here artists use familiar medium and they cut to their genius through.

Take digital photography, for example. Almost everyone has a digital camera or a mobile phone with a camera.

Now introduce digital photography to National Artist Benedicto Cabrera, and what do you get?

Relief, of course. Or appropriations of that evolving series of paintings of a deranged Makar woman that catapulted Bencab to international fame.

For the group exhibit "Optical Medium," on display at the Bencab Museum on Asin Road here, Bencab took them of his students in the mountain and their children, interposed them on his computer, mashed them with his signature strokes and blow them up.

Bencab's digital works are a visual delight.

On one wall of the gallery were the solo portraits of Primitivo Bilisol and her daughter, Bulgene. Other Bencab portraits were those of Reinelle Pamanggaling, Dodong and Mario—enmeshed with Bencab digital touch.

"Patterns always take pictures for their references," Bencab said. "But with this new technology it's like becoming a painter again."

Bencab's Zobel de Ayala's photographs are also blown up and feature crumpled colored silk and paper. Not as easy as they look because they involve double exposures.

They come in abstract expressionist works with the "Untitled" titles resembling that.

Bird Beauties, Wig Textures

The works of Bencab, Zobel de Ayala, Ben Benitez and Wig Tyotuan were featured in 2007's Large 6 Exhibit, which had gone on national tour. Though their works then were humongous, most of the new works are a continuation of the abstract expressionist line.

ACCOMPLISHED National Artist Ben Cabrera dabbles in digital photography for his new exhibit "Optical Medium" at the Bencab Museum.

PHOTOGRAPHER Ben Benitez

Tyotuan's Wrap-Text series is similar to his Large 6 contributions but the human forms are more emphasized and sensualized—black and white nude and anonymous bodies covering but enveloped in huge satin cloth.

The 11 works of Tyotuan show his mastery of intuitive composition.

Benitez has evolved his more famous nude works on film and has transferred those to mixed media graphic effects. His "Pool," "Lust in Eden," "Big Blessing," "Embrace" and "Tribulation," blown up on mixed media give them a new dimension.

"I just thought about it. I scanned them and transferred them through giclee on wood," Benitez said.

He said the result was something like reexamining one's old works.

His "Tribulation," for example, is a portrait of Benitez's old friends—dancers who were known—during an X-ray photo sign.

"They separated after I did this many years ago," Benitez said.

But looking at the work today seems like the spark is still there and to new permutations it evolved on wood.

Which is what this "Optical Medium" is all about: with new technology, old feelings are rekindled with new passion.

Jojit Solano's art of the bizarre

"PlaCE Tales"

MULTI-AWARDED EMERGING BASED young artist Jojit Solano mounts his second solo exhibition titled "Journey's Bells," at Ronald's Up Breakfast and Antiques.

The exhibition collected twenty-five distinct range of interwoven characters and objects in strange or bizarre states as the artist ultimately aims to show that there is a deeper meaning in the mundane.

Ronald's Up is at the ground floor of Antonio Moll and Lifestyle City, 9009 Makati Avenue corner Gomez Eastern Road, Makati. Call 756-0346.

"Girl Time"

UST Conservatory to tackle opera, Broadway

Pretexage D4

Widow," which will be sung in the concert.

Crowd-pleasing repertoire

The repertoire is crowd-pleasing, nothing revolutionary or outside-the-box, and enhanced by the sets, costumes and lighting. Singers will interpret traditional favorites from "Lucia de Lammermoor" (Donizetti), "Rigoletto" (Verdi), "La Boheme" and "Tosca" (Puccini), and "Cavalleria Rusticana" (Mascagni).

There will be complementing by scenes from the golden-oldie operetta "The Student Prince" (Romberg), vintage Broadway musical "West Side Story" (Bernstein), the phenomenal song-through "Les Miserables" and "The Phantom of the Opera" (Webber), and the ground-breaking folk opera "Porgy and Bess" (Gershwin).

During the press launch, baritone Andrew Fernando, soprano Eleanna Cortez and tenor Nahuiel Sirol, with the collaborative pianist Mary Ann Espina, rendered arias by Puccini, Lalo and Webber. The three displayed fine, resonant voices, with Cortez eliciting a clever "Siren" from hard-to-please colleague Fondinola Dorca.

What, no curiosities, Filipino musicals or Zarzuelas? "We thought of this but decided to postpone it," said Janero. "The program was already filled up, and besides the set designs may not be suitable..."

But, he threatened, "we look forward to the day when we will be performing a full-length zarzuela."

For tickets, call the CCP ticket office at 8521125.

FERNANDO Cabangis

DORCA Fernandez

PANTY Palicio Paris

EUGENE delos Santos

HEMEN Espino

LEMUEL de la Cruz

GLORIA Coronel

Two English plays from Gantimpala

GANTIMPALA THEATER, THE RESIDENT drama company and special events group housed inside the historical Lantern Hall, presents Guy de Rhinjonnard's "The Stockist" and Wilfredo Aguava Jr's "Seven Weeks in Manila." Two English plays that close the company's 32nd season.

While more known for producing the Star Classics—"Flowers or Lunes," "Sell Me Tongate," "Bong Alimuit" and "El Filibusterismo," the staging of which has become important educational tours in high school students who study these Filipino stories and novels—Gantimpala also invests English plays.

"Every year, we make it a point to present English plays as a response to the requests of English departments," says director Dennis Trillo. "It's a diversion, it is always challenging to discover something new in these plays, which have been done by other companies in so many ways. To be able to present it and give it a new lease on life thrills me no end."

"In 'The Stockist,' our auditioners see how Mathilde's folly and recklessness bring her much tribulation. In 'New Yorker,' poking fun at Filipinos who now act and sound like Yankees all or only a brief stint in the US is so much fun," he adds.

Gantimpala has also embarked on the National Artist Production Series...plays and short stories written by National Artists for Literature and Theater and revived on stage and the biennial Reel Theater Festival—festivals of the most memorable Balweganag Gantimpala productions; children's musicals; English plays and other well-loved classics.

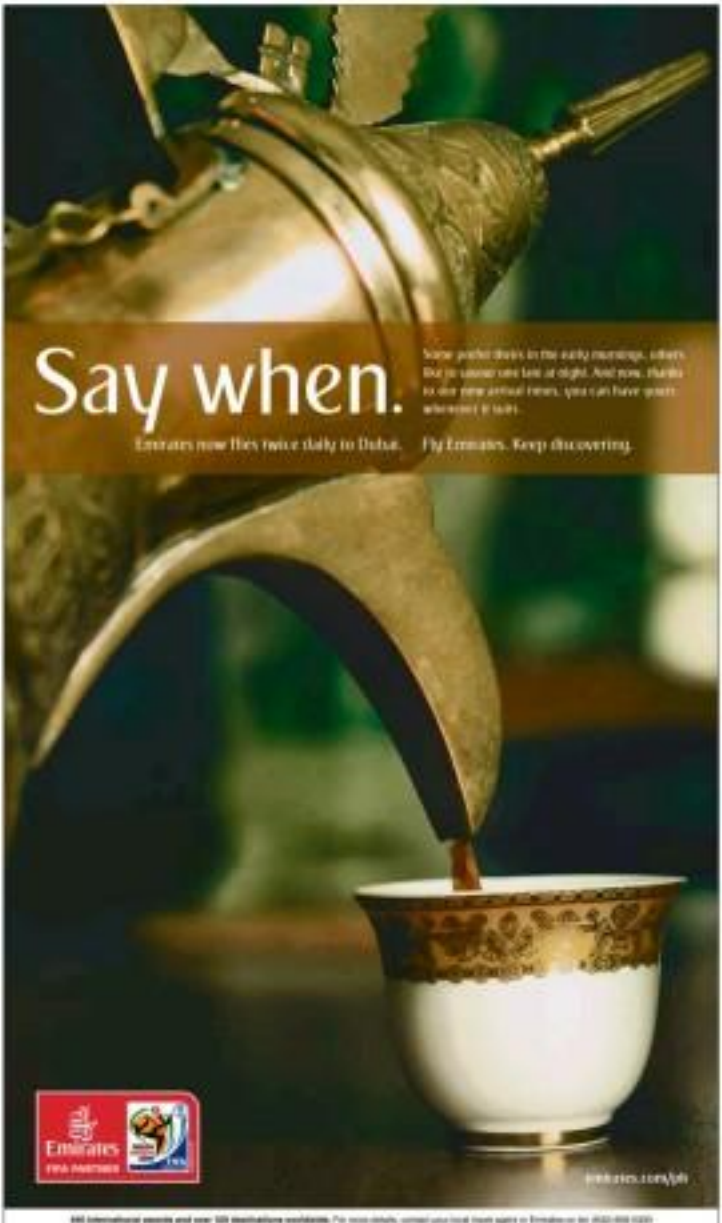
Cast in "The Stockist" and "New Yorker in Manila" are Kidar Bernie, Pamela Bandana, Mijel Mercado, Fonte Flores, Marjorie Lorica, Red Williams Sagebo and Ravel Ormeta.

Assisting Espejo to master the twin-bill productions are Joseph Madero (lights designer), Marianne Sedano (set designer), Alleen Figueroa (costume designer), Carlos Sello Perez (choreographer), Glenda Abiles (production manager) and Gean Alkuin de Los Luminous (director/stage manager).

Performances are slated on Jan. 15-16, 18 a.m./2 p.m., 500 Seat/Small, Las Pilas City; and on Jan. 22-23, 10 a.m./2 p.m., 699 Theater in Quezon City.

"The Stockist" and "New Yorker in Tondo" are presented in cooperation with the National Parks Development Committee and Five Sibuna Cosmetics.

For inquiries, call the Gantimpala Theater Marketing Office 0905-745-3963/509 or visit www.gantimpalatheater-realpjb.com.



Baritone Andrew Fernando teams up with Rachelle Gerodias and Raul Sunico at Philamlife, Jan. 22

ANDREW Fernando

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

A RARE RECITAL TREAT FEATURING baritone Andrew Fernando and soprano Rachelle Gerodias awaits music lovers at the Philamlife Theater on Jan. 22, 8 p.m.

With the special participation of pianist Raul Sunico, the vocal event will once again showcase a newly-found Filipino baritone who is the first Filipino Vinci Prize winner in the Loren L. Zachary National Vocal Competition in the United States, and Grand Prize winner in the Pasadena Opera Guild Vocal Extravaganza in California.

Just a year ago, the baritone drew raves as a versatile singing actor when he played three singing parts in a 21st-century opera, "The Cunning Little Vixen," by Czech composer Leo Janacek, in a New Year production of Long Beach Opera in California.

Opera critic Michael Van Dusen wrote: "Andrew Fernando impressed in his three roles as the Badger, the fox's mate, and as poacher who kills the Vixen. His richly colored voice brought as much variety to the roles as his fearless physicality." Music critic Mark Swed of the Los Angeles Times commended the "excellent singing actors" and singled out the Filipino baritone from "Andrew Fernando made the roles of the Dog, the poacher and the Badger splendidly—and appropriately—gross."

Fernando originally auditioned for the role of the poacher (Forester), but Maestro Andreas Mitisek—after hearing the baritone's vocal range and seeing his acting prowess in the audition—also offered the two remaining singing roles: that of the Dog and the Badger.

"I consider myself very blessed that 'The Cunning Little Vixen' and Long Beach Opera came into my life," Fernando said. "It made a huge impact in my singing life. Leo Janacek's work may be one of the most devastly sweet operas in the 21st century. When my agent, Robert Gibbs, phoned me while I was doing a gig in Greenmont last summer, he was very delighted to tell me that Long Beach Opera (an opera company based in Southern California) was interested in hearing me specifically for the role of Forester in 'Vixen.' I was so enthused not only because it could be an opportunity for employment but because of the fact that this opera is rarely performed in the United States. So I took a vocal score from the library and learned Renata's aria right away so I can sing it in the audition."

Last year, Fernando also sang the title role of Verdi's "Rigoletto" in Opera San Jose in California and got the approval of both critics and audience.

Opera critic Scott Whitehead wrote: "Making his company debut in the title role, Andrew Fernando gave a powerful performance, physically stooped and struggling, intensely driven and deeply suffering. The Philippine native obviously knew this role well and has scored an impression with opera companies in Asia and California. His dynamic range was well- and expressively displayed in solos and ensembles."

The Filipino singer said he has no problem doing both the contemporary and the old reliable opera workhorses. "I love singing contemporary music and I love singing in English although it is a hard language to sing. I suppose the tone of my voice fits both contemporary music and the English language. The Cunning Little Vixen' was written in Czech, but we did it in English at LBO. Vocally, it is not so challenging as a lot of other works as it was very well-written for the voice. Janacek truly had the full understanding of the human voice and range."

Fernando was also in the lead part of the chamber opera "Frankenstein," which was one of the highlights of the celebration of Jamestown's 400th anniversary in Virginia. He shared the festival limelight with pianist Andre Michel Schub, the Virginia Symphony and violinist Ichiak Perlman.

The baritone had earlier performed with New York City Opera in the productions of "Cenderella" and "Tosca." Last year, he did Carl Orff's "On Shape" and the part of the Commendatore in Mozart's "Don Giovanni" in California.

"I never forget the last that I am a Filipino singer," said Fernando.

The Jan. 22 concert of Andrew Fernando and Rachelle Gerodias at the Philamlife Theater is presented by RSB Music Center. Their program includes "Quel guardo il cavaliere" (from "Don Pasquale" by Donizetti), "Hai gia vinta la causa" (from "Le Nozze di Figaro" by Mozart), "The Bloomers" (duet from "Die Zauberflote" by Mozart), "Tanto amore...Tradir di gel sei cor" (from "Turandot" by Puccini), "Quanto amor" (from "Falgar" by Puccini), "Figlia...Mio padre!" (duet from "Rigoletto" by Verdi), Amor (Destiny)," "Somos el Jolly," "Si, Yo Lo Creo" (from "Kiss Me, Kate"), "I Have Dreamed" (from "The King and I"), "This is My Beloved" (from "Kismet") and "Wheels of a Dream" (from "Ragtime").

RAUL Sunico

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For ticket inquiries, call 09175298842.

'Holmes' film takes legendary detective to another level

By Jordan Mari S. de Leon
Contributor

WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN many adaptations of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 1887 fictional character Sherlock Holmes, the most recent film adaptation with the same title is arguably the first modern-day transformation of the legendary detective.

Couple that with solid performances from the supporting cast, interesting repartee between characters, unexpected humor, and memorable high-octane action sequences, and you may have just stirred an entirely different yet engaging new era in the world of Sherlock Holmes.

In his latest case yet, Holmes (Robert Downey Jr.) along with his most trusted friend Watson (Jude Law), a war veteran and doctor, embarks on a quest to stop the plans of the sinister Lord Blackwood (Mark Strong) as accused all of London. Along the way, Holmes bumps into Irene Adler (Rachel McAdams) the only woman who has outwitted the detective and who has maintained a love-hate relationship with him.

As the formidable duo of Holmes and Watson delve puzzle after puzzle, they find their friendship tested and realize that there may be other dark forces at work.

Completely transformed

Although the film's plot is not exactly unique as it lacks in certain areas the element of surprise seen in any detective flick or novel, it is Downey's portrayal of the world's greatest detective that truly shines in the film. Unlike his depiction in the book, Holmes in the film is more of a swashbuckling yet brilliant fighter rather than the smooth, slick crime-solving sleuth that people have long known in the original novel. Downey's Holmes' calculations in every move yet he also throws his smarts so much as he uses his unbelievable brain.

However, Downey still retains Holmes' intelligence and renowned detective skills of observation and deduction. For instance, in many memorable moments in the film, one can vividly see the shades of the original Holmes when Downey smells a piece of cork or when he observes other clues that we are all too ignorant to see, hear or smell.

But more emphasis has been given on his iconic humor, ruthlessness and previously unseen martial arts expertise, which Downey perfectly embodies but is not really underscored in the book.

Downey truly takes Holmes into an entirely new dimension which is more than enough to attract a new yet sizeable audience—one

TURN TO P. E4

Wisdom of the ages

Yehuda Berg, author of 'Kabbalah: The Power to Change Everything,' will be in Manila on Jan. 18 at Rockwell

By Dulce Fortin-Bayday
Contributor

IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP!

If we are to go by the premise of this book, and whether we realize it or not, there is a war going on in our midst. It's drawn to home and only we can do something about it.

This is a war regarding everyone's conscience, and this book is telling us it is time for personal change so that we once more can pursue to reverse the deteriorating situation around us.

Written in simple, smart, concise and sometimes irreverent narrative style, with plenty of anecdotes showing relevance to everyday life, even using the Bible as reference, this book can be an enlightening read for politicians, rulers, scholars, scientists, the religious, housewives, businessmen, etc.

Complete with statistics and historical data, "Kabbalah: The Power to Change Everything," is written by best-selling author Yehuda Berg, a well-known authority on Kabbalah.

What is Kabbalah? Or what is a Kabbalist, like Berg? This book defines him as "someone who desires to develop a relationship with the Creator, and does so in two ways: by wanting ego and by developing a greater capacity to share with others."

Berg was named in 2007 by Newsweek as one of the top five rabbis in the United States. He has taught thousands of people, including celebrities, dignitaries, and prison inmates, and was recently honored as Agent of Change by GQ Magazine, in the category of Education, under the sponsorship of Gentlemen's Fund 2009. Ambassador Adnan Kassar and United

Kabbalah simply means wisdom, and in this book is full of practical lessons learned, with the purpose of leading to action and change. As a progressive manual for daily life it awakens consciousness and creates personal and global change, this reviewer has enough convincing data to affect that change and wake up call to oneself.

Berg uses personal stories, feedback from the blogosphere and plenty of parables from the Bible, "to crack open an awareness that there is no one else to blame—whatever we do, we do to ourselves. He urges us to take responsibility because every action we perform in the present creates a quantum effect."

Thousands of books have been written on how to change the world, how to do something about climate change, the problematic areas of politics, religion, the economy, the negativity around us, unsettling relationships, etc. Yes, we remain the same. We refuse to change. The world has reached a turning point in history and we can either choose to change, or remain the same and watch things get worse. As a result, our shortcomings-thinking and lack of awareness of personal power is resulting havoc on the planet. Just look at how many are anxious about the so-called "end of the world" on Dec. 21, 2012.

According to this somewhat easy-to-read volume, this is actually the date "which marks the end of a 5,126 year era, according to the Mesoamerican Long Count calendar...where this planet and all its inhabitants will experience a positive physical or spiritual transformation,

WISDOM P. E4

GARFIELD
by Jim Davis

A LEPAK
BY JOE ABBEDA

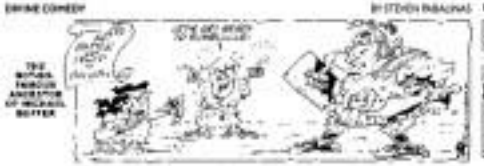
PUGAD BABOY
BY PH. JUNIOR

DICK TRACY

LOVEHAOTS
BY ELIZABETH CHONGCO

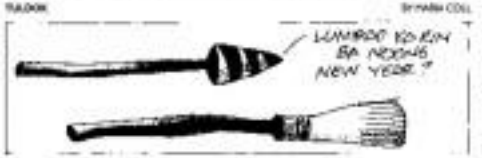
JAMES BOND

DIVINE COMEDY
BY STEVEN PABAJINA



BABY BLUES
BY JERRY SCOTT

TULOOK
BY MARK COLL



BEH
BY DANIEL SHELTON

ATOMO AND WEEDY
BY VINA GARCELLANO

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

KEBO MACHINE
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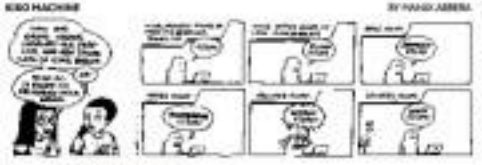


CROSSWORD PUZZLE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Concepts Sudoku

5			9		7			
	9		8		2			1
	2			4		5	8	
9	6						1	3
		1		8		9		
2	3						5	4
	9	5		3		2		
3			7		1	4		
			5		6		3	

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

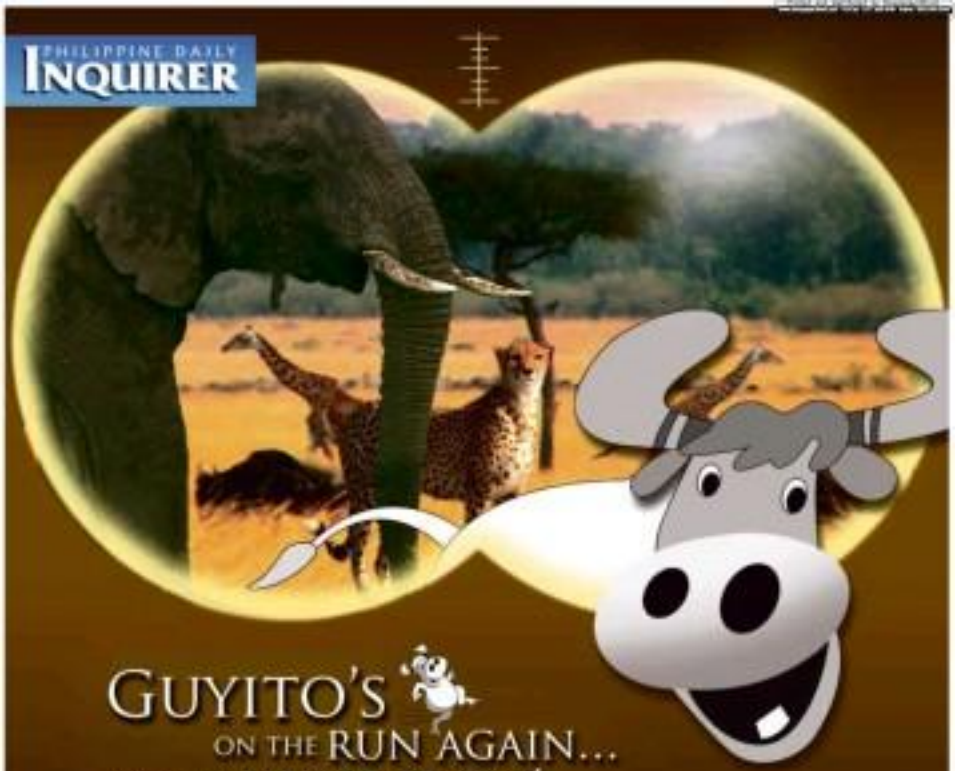
Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

2	7	6	1	4	3	8	9	5
5	4	1	8	9	9	3	2	7
3	3	8	2	5	7	8	1	4
4	5	3	7	8	2	9	5	1
9	8	5	6	1	4	2	7	3
1	2	7	9	3	5	4	8	6
7	1	4	3	2	8	5	6	9
8	3	9	5	6	1	7	4	2
6	5	2	4	7	9	1	3	8

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER



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Pelaez book a must-have

By Mozart Pastrana
Contributor

IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY society, 2009 was the year the book came out.

It power stirred of invited guests swooped in Liceo de Cagayan University for the book launch of Nelson Navarro's "Rodolfo and Elsa Pelaez: A Legacy of the 20th Century." The beloved couple who founded the university 53 years ago will be celebrating their birth centenaries, so the book launch is viewed as the kick-off of the three-year Rodolfo Centennial. (Rodolfo is a contraction of the first syllables of their first names.)

The book talks about how a legal separation and annulment (or is this when such things were unheard of in polite provincial society) led to the collapse of a Pelaez actor's political career. And that's only a tidbit in this well-researched and well-written tome.

Before the guests got their copy of the book, they escaped to the founders' old home. It has now been refurbished as La Casilla, the university's lifestyle museum. The guests were enthralled with interior flower arrangements by the ladies of Rotaract International Cagayan de Oro Chapter. This was the Rotarian ladies' way of honoring their founder, Elsa Pelaez.

A short program launched the book. Rafaella Pelaez, the founder's daughter and board chairperson, welcomed the guests. Cagayan de Oro City Mayor Constantino Jaraula talked about how he personally witnessed the founders' commitment to their vision of holistic education for all; and Rhoanis Dimaisip Gerovien, Oscar Moreno discussed in brief the impact of the University in Northern Mindanao.

BOOK IT. The roll-up book about the Pelaezes across the Cagayan de Oro River is launched to kick off the Rodolfo Centennial, a three-year celebration marking the 100th anniversaries of Rodolfo and Elsa Pelaez.

FRUTO H. Zaldivar Jr., Marlene H. Lutz, and Rafaella P. Pelaez-Ver are only three U. but also the Pelaez group of companies, which is planning a high-end convenience hub at the other side of the Cagayan de Oro River

After all, the group of companies running the university is now poised to develop Rodolfo Circle, a romantic name for the land of the newest bridge in the city. A convenience center, a hotel and a slew of commercial establishments will rise from the veranda to the riverbank, spilling over to the cathedral and city hall. To be called Dezen del Rio, the whole enterprise is designed by architect Delfino S. Pelaez.

Amidst the fanfare during the book launch, the Pelaez grandchildren—Rudolf Caesar, the prize-winning pianist who has been ordained as minister by the Philharmonic Orchestra at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, and Mari Alvin, the gentleman-businessman on the rise—outlined the Rodolfo Centennial.

And they were it. The guests got their copies of the much-awaited book (It's not for sale) and sought out the book author for an autograph. Tanya Endencia made sure the cocktails, catered by Ester Yap's ever reliable Jimmy, was delectable to the taste.

Afterward, everyone went up the grand staircase of Rodolfo Hall for a concert by the distinguished pianist Ester Pastrana and the prize-winning tenor Randy Gingoyon.

Truly classy...and classic.

E-mail the author at mozpast@yahoo.com

Best-selling author Joel Rosenberg to hold conferences in Manila

NEW YORK TIMES BEST-selling author Joel Rosenberg comes to the Philippines Jan. 21-23 for The Signs of the Times conferences.

Rosenberg will speak at the following events: Leaders' Dinner Conference on Jan. 21, 7 p.m. at Crowne Plaza Hotel (registration fee is P2,000); Christian Conference Jan. 22, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., at Christ's Commission Fellowship Greigar (registration is P500); and Youth Conference Jan. 23, 3 p.m., at CCF Ortigas (registration is P350).

Rosenberg analyzes critical Middle East events from a biblical perspective, weaving together history, politics and economics to show how the current ramblings in the Middle East will impact the world.

"To be sure, much about the politics of the region is murky and confusing to Western minds," notes Rosenberg in the introduction of "Epicenter." "But one thing is increasingly certain: The eyes of the nations are riveted upon Israel and the Middle East, the epicenter of the enormous events shaking our world and shaping our future."

Rosenberg is a writer and communications strategist who has worked with some of the world's most influential and provocative leaders, including former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Israeli deputy prime minister Yossy Sharansky.

Rosenberg is the author of best-selling political thrillers "The Last Jihad," "The Last Days," "The Ezekiel Option," "The Copper Scroll," "Dead Heat." His novels, based on historical prophecy, contain scenes that seemingly predict international headlines. "The Last Jihad," for one, opens with a terrorist hijacked jet that goes on a suicide crash into an American city, resulting in a war with Iran that threatens over weapons of mass destruction. It mirrors the sometimes 9/11 attack in the US, but was written months before the actual incidents.

"Rosenberg's books come at a time when geopolitical issues are raging in the region, particularly in the Middle East. Every one is asking: What is coming?" says Paul Aragones, CEO of OMF Literature, publisher and distributor of Rosenberg's books in the Philippines. "Rosenberg's in depth are eye opening, making us to look at our lives and to certain of our destination when the end comes."

Rosenberg also wrote politically investigative books, "Epicenter" and "Inside the Revelation," which contain extensive interviews and in-depth study, on about the current tension in the Middle East and how it will affect the future.

"OMF Literature is privileged to publish and distribute Rosenberg's several books in the Philippines, making them available to readers nationwide at only 40 percent of the imported price," says Aragones.

"The Last Jihad," "The Last Days," "The Ezekiel Option," "The Copper Scroll," "Dead Heat," "Epicenter" and "Inside the Revelation" are originally published by Tyndale House Publishers and are published and distributed in the Philippines by OMF Literature.

These are available at National Book Store, Powerbooks, Philippine Christian Bookstores and other bookstores nationwide. Also available at OMF Lit Bookshops (Manchesterg, Pasadena, Cubao and Davao). For online purchase, log on to www.OMFLit.com.

For more information about the Signs of the Times conferences, contact CCF at 6324830-17 or visit www.signsofthetimes.ph.

Wisdom of the ages

Front page 6

while others believe it is the beginning of an apocalypse."

How this book is different is that it demonstrates, using modern means of communication, that no matter how bleak everything seems to be, all these can be transformed for the better. This can be achieved by just shifting our minds, our consciousness and our beliefs; by letting go of our ego; by being humble, silent; by learning from our humiliations and failures; by discovering God; and by looking at The bigger picture, devoid of any personal agenda. And there is no time for it than by starting to focus on the now, before we run out of time, before everything goes worse, but first, we must really truly want to change ourselves. It is our decision.

The book was launched in the United States May 4 last year, and the author will embark on an Asian tour, specifically choosing Manila as his first stop, to spread his message of hope to the aftermath of the devastating typhoons. ("Ondoy" and "Pepeng") that hit Metro Manila and Southern Luzon.

Catch Berg in the Philippines on Jan. 28, 7 p.m. at Rockwell Tent, Makati. To pre-register, text 0920-9220008 or e-mail philippines@ask-holdi.com. "Rethink: The Power to Change Everything" is available in all Fully Booked branches or fullybooked.ph

'Holmes' film . . .

Front page 6

that can prove the theories of the trademark Holmes' characters, tics and appreciate a more skillful approach to the characters.

The chemistry between the characters also stands out in the film as Jude Law's depiction of a more assertive Dr. Watson results in an interesting and tension-filled relationship with Holmes (reactions). Law's performance makes Watson more of an equal to Holmes than a sidekick. Mark Strong, as Lord Blackwood, provides a solid and memorable performance of a villain that Rachel McAdams, as Holmes' love interest Irene Adler, was seemingly overshadowed by Downey's brilliance.

In short, there is only a shadow of the original Holmes people have grown to love and admire. But his transformations into the more modern-day action hero who still possesses the intelligence

JUDE Law plays Watson

of prowess and the exceptional forensic observation and deductive skills of the original detective may just prove to be a Holmes that people will remember for many years to come and one that will surely spawn its many sequels.

Without a doubt, Downey is the new age Sherlock Holmes.

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor: Rowena G. Velarde

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Journalist as filmmaker

By Rayzel San Diego Jr.

Kapuso reporter Cesar Apolinario makes third indie movie in Tondo

CESAR APOLINARIO, his journalism combos his filmmaking, and vice versa.

Like his first two movies, "Basal" and "Sanrama," Apolinario's third indie film "Pursuwi" was inspired by his experiences in the field.

"Pursuwi," which runs from Jan. 13 to 19 as the Indieffetor of Robinsons Galleria, is loosely based on a real-life story he noted...

"I did a 15-minute documentary for the [GMA 7 show] 'Reporters' Notebook' on kids who dive for scrap and garbage in the sea," he related. "I met a 12-year-old diver, movie girl who earned P50 a day."

JOURNALIST 11

2009 House Calls

TV networks top MMFF

By Rayzel San Diego Jr.

IT'S OFFICIAL.

The country's two major networks topped the recently-concluded Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF), now on its 35th year.

According to box-office records obtained by the bayanan from MMFF executive committee member Ric Camiguin, the film entries of GMA 7 and ABS-CBN ranked first and second as of Jan. 7, the official end of the two-week festival which began Dec. 25.

GMA Films-Imus Productions' fantasy caper "Ang Darkulo" ranked No. 1 at the tills—with total earnings of P60.4 million in two weeks.

GMA Films head Annette Gozon-Abrogar and lead star Marian "Bang" Rivilla Jr. told the bayanan that "Panday" broke the P100-million mark as of Jan. 8. "We are planning to extend its run until Feb. 8," said Rivilla.

Coming in second was Star Cinema's romance drama "I Love You, Goodbye," with P54.2 million. Star Cinema is the film arm of ABS-CBN, Same thrill of GMA 7 as the TV ratings derby as well.

In third place was the OctoArts/M-Zet/APT horror-comedy "Ang Darling Kong Aswang," with P87.6 million.

Like "Panday," "Darling" is top-billed by another GMA 7 star Vic Sotto, a perennial festival topnotcher.

TM 83

BOWELL Santiago wearing his "Missy" specs.

His very own official seal

By Maximo R. Cruz

FOR HIS ROLE AS PRESIDENT OF THE Philippines in the new drama series, "Tanging Yaman," Nowell Santiago personally designed the seal of his office.

Bowell, who will play President Juan Policarpio, said he consulted with designer Paul Cabral, who created outfits for the late president Cory Aquino, for the perfect herong Tagalog. He also bought himself a pair of very distinctive eyeglasses.

Bowell told bayanan Entertainment during the "Tanging Yaman" press launch last week: "Step has his weirdness. Kailangan ito eh, as I designed my own seal. Then I called, not only Paul Cabral but also other designers who make clothes for [the current crop of] presidential wannabes. I wanted an outfit that people would identify only with me."

He added: "I took a vacation in Hong Kong before I started working on the show. I went to a store there to buy eyeglasses. I was surprised when the Chinese salesman handed me this pair—just like Snoopy! I took that as a sign."

ENT 11

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3 ZOMBIELAND
4 THE REBOUND
5 AVATAR
6 AVATAR (Digital 3D)
7 UNIVERSAL SOLDIER: REGENERATION
8 I LOVE YOU, GOODBYE
9 AMO PAMDAY
10 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS: THE SQUEAKQUEL

MANILA

1 THE REBOUND
2 ZOMBIELAND
3 UNIVERSAL SOLDIER: REGENERATION
4 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS: THE SQUEAKQUEL
5 SHERLOCK HOLMES
6 AVATAR
7 I LOVE YOU, GOODBYE

METRO EAST

1 ZOMBIELAND
2 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS: THE SQUEAKQUEL
3 SHERLOCK HOLMES
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5 AMO PAMDAY
6 AVATAR
7 I LOVE YOU, GOODBYE
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LIPA

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3 I LOVE YOU, GOODBYE
4 THE GAMER

CABANATUAN

1 SHERLOCK HOLMES
2 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS: THE SQUEAKQUEL
3 AMO PAMDAY
4 ZOMBIELAND

STARMILLS

1 SHERLOCK HOLMES
2 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS: THE SQUEAKQUEL
3 AVATAR
4 AMO PAMDAY
5 ZOMBIELAND
6 I LOVE YOU, GOODBYE

IMUS

1 SHERLOCK HOLMES
2 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS: THE SQUEAKQUEL
3 AMO PAMDAY
4 I LOVE YOU, GOODBYE
5 ZOMBIELAND
6 AVATAR

ANGELES

1 SHERLOCK HOLMES
2 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS: THE SQUEAKQUEL
3 BAD LIEUTENANT
4 ZOMBIELAND

TACLOBAN

1 AMO PAMDAY
2 I LOVE YOU, GOODBYE
3 AVATAR

DUMAGUETE

1 AVATAR
2 PREDATOR
3 I LOVE YOU, GOODBYE

BACOLOD

1 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS: THE SQUEAKQUEL
2 SHERLOCK HOLMES
3 ZOMBIELAND
4 I LOVE YOU, GOODBYE
5 BAD LIEUTENANT
6 AVATAR

ILOILO

1 SHERLOCK HOLMES
2 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS: THE SQUEAKQUEL
3 ZOMBIELAND
4 AVATAR
5 I LOVE YOU, GOODBYE
6 AMO PAMDAY

DENSAN

1 AVATAR
2 PLANET 51
3 I LOVE YOU, GOODBYE
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'Overnight' sensations keep veteran stars' hopes alive

THE ENTERTAINMENT WORLD IS IN love with bright, brilliant and flaming youth, beautiful and talented young people who zoom up in the top with astounding velocity and keeping reminding older people of the physical playedowns they too, once possessed, or aspired to.

But what about movie matinee talents on the other side of 30, or 50? Is it all over for them?

The show biz success passed them by for good—or, can they too still dream of making it in a business where youth is the pearl of great price and age is the ultimate liability?

Most of the time, age is indeed practically a curse for undiscovered talents. Once in a rare while, however, the cynical gods of show business are unexpectedly put in their place by the very ironic and appealing verdict of public admirers. And, therein lies a doubly inspiring tale.

Only a couple of years ago, Susan Boyle was "just" a plain old maid with a golden voice unheard by the rest of the world. Then, she joined the singing tilt, "Britain's Got Talent," performed "I Dreamed A Dream" from "Les Miserables," and not only brought the Scots down, but all of London as well.

Tapping Barbra

Also, in the tilt's grand finale, she placed only second—but, there was something about her and her talent that kept her dreams alive. She went on to cut her debut album—and, lo and behold, it sold more copies than singing superstar **Barbra Streisand**'s own new compilation, and in fact ended up as the best-selling debut album of all time.

Some years before Susan's second place finish, "Britain's Got Talent" had produced another unlikely winner in similarly middle-aged mien **Paul Potts**, who went on to become a singing star in his own right—but Susan's story has turned out to be even bigger than his.

What is a about the plain-looking old maid that has made millions of people around the **world fall in love with her, despite the fact that** she's practically the antithesis of the contemporary **world's resident concept of the quintessential** media-creature?

Fine, of course, there's her strong, beautiful and expressive singing voice. But, when you **study it more closely, it isn't the best voice**

VIEWFINDER

Senior U. Torre

His show biz success passed mature talents by, for good?

SUSAN Boyle

EVA Castillo

and we ever heard, not by a long shot. In fact, in some numbers, it even seems mean-as-hell to **enough, brilliance and emotional fervor.**

But, after a while, that seemed to be prime consideration. The viewing and listening public has taken Susan Boyle to its bosom precisely because she isn't young and lovely.

Thus, her screamed and unexpected success story gives everyone else hope that, in their own good time, their dreams will be fulfilled.

Interestingly, Susan has her counterpart in the Philippines—40-something-singer **Minerva "Eva" Castillo**. Just last year, Eva was a basbreak. After years of scrimping to numerous singing tilts, she stopped dreaming and opted to film-style-musical gigs—and she's making.

Luckily for her, one of Eva's biggest rivals in those singing tilts who had become a big singing star, had not forgotten about her. When **Regine Velasquez** produced a TV special last year, she asked her staffers to look Eva up and give her another crack at stardom—even those 20 years later.

This time around, Eva didn't let the golden opportunity pass her by and, lest fill acknowledge of the belated showcase Regine had provided her, Eva now has a flourishing singing career—to Regine's great psychic satisfaction.

Susan and Eva are "refreshing" reasons the stars who lend added exclusive to the show biz setting. The market how stupid takes, real talent will find its rightful place in the entertainment spotlight.

TV networks . . .

From page F1

"Darling" was promoted extensively in its lead star's home network, Bio "Pinoy" (Bertlin) said "I Love You" (Angelica Panganiban).

Its fourth place, the Regal horror franchise "Shake, Rattle & Roll 10" netted an aggregate of P77.8 million.

In fifth spot was another Regal entry, the Claudine family drama "Mano Po 6: A Mother's Love," with P42 million.

Placing 6th to 10th the HPO-Jon Mikegami-Gaisty Garcia comedy-drama "Nobody, Nobody But ... Juan," which posted a total of P33.9 million.

In last place, Bolot's "Wapakman" only earned P16 million—making it the most underperforming entry as well.

This year, the first wife earned a total of P427 million—which is below last year's all-time high of P450 million. (These figures were rounded up, said Limbaghan.)

This year's first telly also failed to reach the fool's target of P1 billion.

His very own . . .

From page F1

Bowell, who is better known as a director of love shows, said he stumbled in an acting workshop facilitated by award-winning actress-director Laurice Guillen, who tapped the movie veteran for "Tanging Yaman."

"When she first saw me, Lizzie hugged me and said 'Thank you for accepting the role' Coming from her, that's something. It also helped that I was in Cathy Molina's two movies earlier. That was good training," he said.

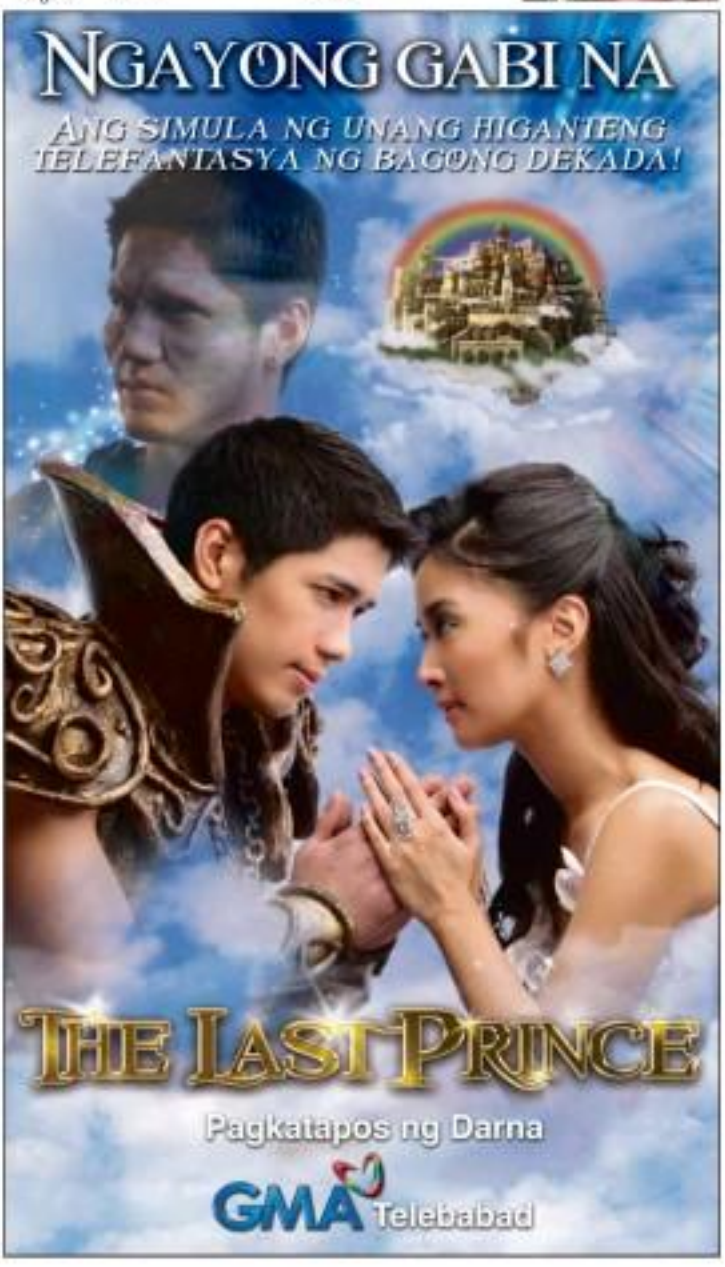
Bowell was referring to Molina's blockbusters Ellen "A Very Special Love" and it's sequel, "You Changed My Life." Bowell played Albert, the very demanding brother of John Lloyd Cruz's character Miggs.

Un-like movie

In "Tanging Yaman," Bowell is a former fireman who rises from the ranks to become the enemy's chief executive. "He's smart but principled. He's very determined. All his life, he works hard to provide only the best for his family," the actor-director said. "Like Juan, I'm fortunate in one thing—to share with others the knowledge that my dad (the late—director Efrin Gatmaitan Sr.) has bequeathed to me."

"The TV series is very different from the movie version," said Manny Valo, who co-directs the show with Lito Catalano. "It centers on the lives of the members of the Five Beauty trading in Makeabilang. We did some research. We studied the protocol that the President follows, for one thing. We also had to find the right location for the presidential palace. It's tough working on this show."

"Tanging Yaman" premieres today after "TV Patrol" on ABS-CBN. Also starring Beth Tamayo, Melissa Ricks, Alex Evora, Tommy Ong, Ajed Tuadles, Mylene Dizon and Lee Min Hwan.



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REGENERATION

New Year's resolutions: Marriage, kids

MADRID—GETTING hitched and having kids are among Hugh Grant's New Year's resolutions for 2010, the British film star said on Thursday in an interview with Spanish television.

"I have some resolutions like losing some pounds. I also need to get married and have children. Until I... new house," he told the evening news broadcast of private television Telecinco.

Grant, 49, was in Spain to promote his new movie, "Did You Hear About The Morgans?"

The "Bridget Jones Diary" star has had a string of companions including Elizabeth Hurley and Jemima Khan but has never been married.

Earlier Thursday Grant joked during an interview with the online edition of daily newspaper El Mundo that he had dumped Dido a "young, movable mat full of hope and enthusiasm" to "an old shoe-hole" since he filmed "Nearing with the Wind" in Spain over two decades ago.

Last month he confessed he was drunk when he bought a 1960s painting by Andy Warhol of Elizabeth Taylor at an auction for two million pounds. He sold it six years later for 13 million pounds.

AFP

RUSHES SPECIAL

Hugh Grant

SANDRA Bullock

Sandra steals show

LOS ANGELES— Sandra Bullock entered Hollywood's awards season in high fashion on Wednesday winning two People's Choice honors for the rodeo comedy romedy "The Proposal" and his Favourite Movie Actress.

The "Twilight" vampire romance series took home four People's Choice trophies. Favorite Movie, Favorite Female Movie Star, Top On-Screen Team for its actors, and one of its stars, Taylor Lautner, landed the award for Breakthrough Movie Actor.

Other key movie winners were Johnny Depp, favorite movie actor, and Hugh Jackman, who emerged Top Action Hero for his role in "X-Men Origins: Wolverine."

Bullock told reporters her recent success with critics, awards and at box offices was "unplanned, unexpected and most of."

"I've had two wonderful experiences this year, and I think most actresses will tell you if you had one in five years you'd be lucky," she said. Reuters

Princess back on TV...

From page F1

to me, I got affected by her too. I was quite shocked about Tita Nena's resolution though. If rather use laughter to lose it and the least all the time.

I sincerely wish they patch things up. Based on Tita Nena's text, their problem is deeply rooted since Liezl was a kid. It's not time, but love, that heals all wounds. May the love Tita Nena and Liezl have for each other do just that. All members and daughters have episodes where they don't exactly like each other but that doesn't make them "unlove" one another. Maybe Tita Nena and Liezl should not be too much of a mother-daughter to be a friend.

Orpe Smith and his wife caused quite a commotion at the Vhs studio after Pepe's grueling stint in "Celebrity Real Life Stories" aired on Cignal TV's Viva Cinemas Channel. When asked about his new life, Pepe mentioned his new girlfriend but failed to give the see princess on his comeback garden

"May good also to right dah long hardships," Orpe said in the interview, "kasi dito ngayon para wala kaming stuck."

That didn't go too well with his wife as she let him hand on the face and a verbal war erupted. Instead of saying his true expression "rock and roll," all Orpe could do was duck and tread.

***

Aga Muhlach took a break from shooting his scenes with Regine Velasquez, "All All The Things," because he had to lose weight. According to his real dad, Tito Cheng, Aga is back in shape. He came home from the United States ahead of his wife Charlene as he could not stand the cold.

Even if Aga has returned down, he will always remain a "heavy weight" in the acting department.

E-mail ...

kaj@yahoo.com

Top of the tabloids

The top show biz stories in the tabloid Bandera this week. (And why we are amused, if we are amused.)

★Dennis Gazebo waking up in hell? (And elsewhere...?)

★Erich Gonzales subject to rubbish for IG videos. (Promise?)

★DI ni Andrenges matapos John at Sarina Pia Guanio. (Ay, ha-ha-ha! Andrenges ah! Ulyanin.)

★Bally Sagiadinos, John Lloyd Cruz mag-dinner sa birthday ni Willie. (Bakit daw dito?)

★Karina Bautista, na-Cebu mag-pa-pregnancy test? (Buntis ba mana?)

★Andrei Anhod na picture ni Krista Ando na "Whore" (Quick!)

★Regine Velasquez may problema daw hindi mahirap? (Ha-ha-ha! Isa-isahin mo naman.)

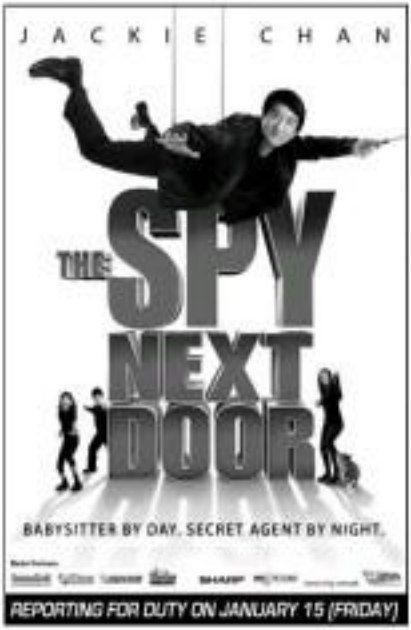
★Sana ni Angel Locsin ayaw daw Daim Silmeda, mas type n'ya Ultra Belabarria. (Sana si Dawn [san.])

★Gori Pio gabi-an na kaya nagwedding? (Tulo na ulit sa time...)

★Claudine Barretto di maka-pagmahin dahil sa sakit? (That's a valid concern.)

★Gusto kong gumanda ang boobs ko! ... Kim Bernal. (Thin-ner?)

2-wheel adventure in Sakai, Japan



BY TRISH BOYLE
dossa, Hiroto Inoue and Mayumi Inoue traveled on two wheels to Sagada, Bohol, Lanzhou and through the mean streets of Manila.

In their latest biking adventure on "I Pitchers," they hit the clean streets of Japan, a land full of contradictions.

It makes better known to Filipinos for its cars, Japan is also a bike-loving country where old and young use mass by bike. cyclists are so respected, ed by motorists and train stations come with huge bicycle parking garages.

Hiroto and his team do most of their cycling in the quaint city of Sakai, the country's bicycle capital.

The episode airs tonight after "Sadot" on GMA.

Journalist as . . .

From page F1

"Framed" tells story...focusing on her quest to raise money to keep her mother's ruined grass in the country.

"So the struggle to save the war money, she meets the many faces of a corrupt and debilitating nature," Spellmann explained.

Biggest challenge in making "Framed" was working with the child actors, led by "Stairway to Heaven" discovery Barbie Imperial as the dead mute heroine.

The shooting was in Tondo, near Manila Bay where sight of the garbage was overwhelming and the stench was just as awful.

Commitment

Spellmann was floored by his cast's commitment. "They showed your pains, moodiness, even the young ones," he said.

Richie went to the school for the deaf and mute for two weeks, away was Shavee caught designer during the shoot and was in the hospital for a week; Mark Gil, Shavee, Pekin, Arnold Reyes and the kids "delivered well."

Getting it right on the first take was vital, considering the limited time and budget. "We had to complete the shoot in six days. Everyone seemed to believe in the project, even especially our executive producer Jeffrey Jeturian (fellow reporter) de la Cruz. She even acted in the film. That breaked my records," Spellmann recalled.

In making "Portland," he said, he wanted to tackle the seemingly unbreakable "cycle of poverty." In our country, "I believe corruption is the reason behind the and state of our economy. I speak here not as a media man but as a filmmaker."

Still, Spellmann is keenly aware of the synergistic relationship between his two jobs.

Sometimes (does) me to arrive the problem with his projections. But art is my passion," he said.

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'José—Fly Reporter' scrapbook

How the schools caught the bug

WHO KNEW THAT creating a buzz for literacy could be this exciting?

Not even the back-to-back flooding during the two months last year than the "José... Fly Reporter" series ran in this section could dampen the spirit of some 2,000 parent-tutored kids and their teachers in their freshness for the hauntingly tragic in the story.

Classes were suspended, schools were turned into evacuation and relief centers and teachers as well as students pitched in on the clean-up following the calamities. But more classes resumed, our readers were just as eager to learn about the adventures of fly-reporter José and his company of story insects.

On the Mondays that classes were suspended because of the heavy rains, flooding and landslides, our dedicated parents-teachers Ferdie Gómez, Marivel B. Olivo and Irene Mercado-Bacerdas... made the extra trip to Bonifacio Elementary School in Baguio City to speak delivery of Inquirer copies paid for by friends and make sure these were kept safe and dry for use by their students as soon as classes had resumed.

Eva B. Dadagan, the classes coordinator for Bagiuio in Olongapo City who is one of Mercedes's 2009 Outstanding Teachers, said they held "José—Fly Reporter" activities for an entire

Partner school: Hermosa P. Talisic Elementary School (Mabalacat City)
No. of students supplied with Inquirer: 90 in Grade 5; 90 in Grade 3
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Principal: Marilyn C. Mucanos

Partner school: Jose Magsaysay Elementary School (Makati City)
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Principal: Imelda Perez

Partner school: Hollis E. Brown Elementary School
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Teachers: Eva B. Ismagas, Olivia Quiles, Dionisio Orchies, Pia Farin, Aida Almoneng, Andrea Alcala, Annie Lopez
Principal: Virginia J. Hita

Partner school: Antonio Hills Elementary School
No. of students supplied with Inquirer: 216 in Grade 3
Teacher: Pauline Angeline
Principal: Shiela D.V. Dantan

TGI bench/

TULOY sa Don Bosco

JOSE Magsaysay

SAINT JOHN'S

BUGS art

ST. ALPHONSUS Lipawi

NELLIE E. Brown

CARMELA Regina Banares

JOSE Magsaysay

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Playgrounds for the MIND

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Member Schools

UM reaps 3 Pacucoa awards

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINDANAO has received another set of awards from the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (Pacucoa) during its Annual Assembly and Awards Ceremony held at Diamond Hotel, Manila Dec. 11. UM has received the following recognition; School with the Highest Number of Accredited Programs in the Country (Rank 2); School with the Highest Number of Accredited Programs in Mindanao, and the First Electrical Engineering School in the Country Granted Level IV Re-accredited Status.

UM president and board chair Dr. Guillermo E. Torres received the awards from Pacucoa. The event was attended by more than 279 Pacucoa member institutions in the country.

More than 75 percent of UM's academic programs have at least Level I accreditation from Pacucoa. Its business administration, liberal arts, secondary and elementary education, and electrical engineering programs are the first to be granted Level II to Mindanao; by the same accrediting agency. Last year, its electrical engineering was awarded for being the first in the country to be granted Level III Re-accreditation.

Accreditation is a system in the Philippine education which an academic institution continuously improves their educational quality and services through self-evaluation and judgment of peers. Its nationwide program on an institution is granted a status for complying common accepted standards of quality and excellence in national and international levels. Criteria of evaluation are based on the institution's mission and vision; faculty; instruction; laboratories; library; campus facilities; student personnel administration; and organization and administration.

Benefits of accreditation includes among others, administrative and financial deregulation; authority to graduate students without prior approval from Commission on Higher Education (CHED); priority in the awards of grants, subsidies and funding assistance from CHED for faculty development, facilities improvements and other development programs; and authority to offer new programs without need of prior approval from CHED.

Further, CHED has given due credits to HEIs with Level III and Level IV accreditation in the application of autonomous and deregulated status.

Feati University envisions a greener environment

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSness is making its mark in the auditorium psyche after recent succeeding theatrical productions. Interfaces left the country with lives and properties damaged or lost. Feati University has long been environmentally aware and this is evidenced by its recent spearheading of research initiatives by a consortium of university belt institutions, in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), for the rehabilitation efforts of the seemingly "biologically dead" Pasig River.

Taking further steps in its green advocacy, the university is planning to contribute to both the Metropolis' clean air and water supply through a synergic tree-planting effort. Feati is soundtracking to Arbi-CSR Foundation Inc's Barangay Balikatanan efforts to restore crucial areas of the La Mesa Watershed, an island nature sprawl with 2,740 hectares within the Metro which is famous for distributing his diverse tree species.

To help restore the watershed's beauty and environmental benefits, the university is staging a fashion show for a cause. Dubbed "Blue → Gold → Green," the event will not only showcase the best design creations of the University's School of Fine Arts but most importantly it will be able to raise funds to be donated to the Save La Mesa Watershed project. The event will be held Jan. 20 at Feati Bridgeport in Sta. Cruz, Manila. Through this, the university hopes that in its own way it is able to lend a helping hand to our ailing Mother Nature. For further event details, please call 733-0123 local 406.

CEU MALOLOS DENTISTRY STUDENTS WIN 3RD PLACE IN ASIAN DENTISTRY RESEARCH CONTEST

Centro Escolar University-Malolos Dentistry students bagged the third place in the contested Dentistry Area Student Clinician Paper Competition during the Asian Dental Congress (Dentcon) Quezon City 2009 held at the Quezon Convention Center. Pictured are Jose Gabriel Robles III, Joshua Aquino, and Dr. Shirley Wong, program head and the research adviser, representing the Philippines after winning the Dentcon-Philippines Student Clinician Research Program. Team Philippines' research on "The Gardnerella Biofilm Formation and Interspecies Synergism in Periodontal Disease" was a standout among the researches presented by the participants from South-East Asian countries. The delegates of the competition were Prof. Johann de Vera (Australia), Prof. Jan Nonnis (Japan), and Prof. Patricia Reynolds (London). Photo shows Dr. Johann M. Alvarez, JVP for CEU-Malolos (right), with Dr. Shirley S. Wong (left), and the CEU Malolos Dentistry students' representatives.

IT is still the way to go!

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS HOUNding the world, particularly the United States, augurs well, at least for the future of Information Technology (IT) graduates born in the Philippines. Broader use of key engineering, math and applicable technology or seasoning by exam and many industries means that IT will continue to be a hot career choice. In spite of the impression by some quarters that there has been a decrease in IT demand, IT remains to be one of the fastest growing careers today. According to the US Government Accountability Office, employment in the computer sciences and math fields increased by 78 percent, in contrast to employment which increased only by 17 percent in non-IT fields.

The fact that President Obama urged schools in America to "consider computer science skills as one of the core courses students need to develop critical 21st Century skills." A Microsoft executive from Ireland also stressed that "It is vital to support the connection between the needs of education and the world of business to ensure that we continue to bring new ideas, new computer education students and expertise that can help drive innovation and entrepreneurship."

The last decade of business process outsourcing (BPO) has also increased the demand for more highly-skilled professionals that have a good grasp of computer-aided thinking. This is supported by the fact that the recent growth spurt in the BPO industry in the Philippines has been fueled not by traditional call centers but more high-end outsourcing such as software development and engineering services, finance, logistics and accounting, HR services, animation, Web design, gaming and publishing, legal and medical knowledge-type services.

Perhaps the best way to prove to become one of the global leaders in the BPO industry, high school graduates that are deciding on what possible course to take for college may want to seriously consider courses that are IT-based with emphasis on skills development. Some of these courses like Computer Science, Information Technology, Information Management with specialization in fields like Robotics, Computer Animation, Software Development and/or Engineering, Web Application Development, Multimedia Technologies and Engineering (Computer, Electronics, Communications, Electrical, Industrial). It would also be good to look at schools that allow students to get certifications from companies like Oracle, SAS Microsoft and Cisco, to give them the competitive edge to find jobs anywhere in the world.

LPU deputized by CHEd as Etoeap HEI

DIOSDADO P. PANGANIBAN

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EUREKA! *Quarrtsz N. Lee-Chua*

New Zealand escapade becomes learning adventure

ON CHRISTMAS MORNING, MY FAmily and I were on a floatplane, gliding above lakes, lakets, and volcanoes in Rotorua, New Zealand.

The volcanoes were supposed to be genuinely dormant, but you never know. In the course of one giant volcanic, lava was so hot it glowed blue, not red.

Looking at the primeval expanse of land and water beneath us, we witnessed the grandeur of our world and it was but natural to give thanks to the Creator from whom everything flowed forth.

In the eerie silence, we realized that our world was indeed beautiful. Human wars and quarrels paled before nature's majesty. Everyday pettiness faded away and we were children again.

In the afternoon, we laughed at the kiwi bird's quirkiness, reveled eagerly by the kiwi fruit, and marveled at the shows beneath the fossil of the silver fern, the national symbol of the Kiwis, the nickname for New Zealanders.

In New Zealand, we came face to face with nature, and with ourselves.

NATURE TRIPPING. Reed chooses Tarzan in Tree Adventures (left). He tries horseback riding for the first time, through Rotorua, and is hooked.

Me Tarzan

The city has its advantages, to be sure, but if we need to escape cubicles and classrooms, the choices are limited—bathroom counters that need to be reserved, gaudy convenience malls, time, crowded pavements so rough you don't hear when you eat.

Tree Adventures (0800-DARING), a half hour ride out of Auckland, was a great antidote to city stress, for two hours, in Woodhill forest, we are only reminded to eat, be careful not to fall down, wiggled through barrels, balanced on tightropes and, best of all, flew down flying foxes. Mind a touch of acrophobia (fear of heights), and did only the basic course a few metres above the ground.

But my husband and son scaled the tree of their lives, skipping over ropes, hanging onto swaying steps, stamina-testing zipwalk obstacles, many above the trees.

Tree Adventures is not just physical—the challenges are mental as well. My son had to think about how to get over tall pinnate (meant for longer legs) while still maintaining his balance. My husband had to think how not to rely too much on his shoulders, so as not to inflame an old injury, as he held on to much-needed pulleys and harnesses.

Six-session Tree Adventures is a popular retreat for students and executives. Not only is it a decent team-building activity, it also counteracts mental and physical loafing.

"I never thought I could do that," my son said after he finally came down to earth, gazing up at the treetops where he was moments before. For someone who had never climbed anything except ancient playhouses, Tree Adventures made him more confident about his body and himself. He's a few hours, he was Tarzan.

Doing the Segway

A few years ago, the Jurassic Dom Kumen made the cover of Time Magazine for creating a form of transport he called Segway, which promises the world: the Segway Personal Transporter.

A cross between a scooter and a bicycle, the Segway responds to human movement. Instead of sitting down, we stand on the saw, and balance is no problem. To go front, back, left or right, we just have to lean towards that direction.

After 10 minutes of practice, and instruction from Pauline Baker of Magic Intermediate Segway Tours, we were off for a close-up look of the charming village of Ohinemutu, 15 minutes by leisurely Segway pace.

We rode Segways in vast crumbling flats and tunnels, never used since New Zealand was never invaded. Segways were excellent climbing machines and, with the wind on our faces, we reached the summit of Mount Fairfax (the entry of Segways on narrow lanes giving the same result). The views of the gulf, the mountains, the forests, the plains, the valleys, and the non-flats there were spectacular.

Segways are not only fun but, since they run on electricity, are environment-friendly as well. I hope Segways become popular on the Philippines—they are a good alternative to cars and taxis.

Overcoming fears

When I was 7 years old, my parents took my sister and me on our first-ever horseback rides in Baguio City. Predictably, we clambered onto the horses' backs, but when I thought would like the prelude to a dream turned into a nightmare.

The guide was supposed to lead us round and round a paddock but, suddenly, his horse galloped wildly and crashed into the bamboo fence (and rains) in front, then reared up on its hind legs.

I desperately clung on to the fat and the reins, trying not to fall as the horse stood almost vertically. The guides came running, and finally managed to bring our horses safely.

I learned later that my male horse was feeling "amorous" towards the female horses in front. It should not have been given to a beginner, and a child at that. But the damage was done. After that first horseback ride, I vowed never to do it again.

But my son, who had never ridden a horse before, begged to do so in New Zealand. It would have been so easy to say no, and tell him my scars story, but this would be a one-time. Horseback riding could be exhilarating, and I could use deeper lens of the experience.

My researched online and decided to try the Hoddan Valley Stations Horse Trekking, which billed their horses as suitable not just for experts, but also for beginners.

On a clear morning, I set out to confront my fear. I told the instructor about my previous experience, and they gave me Shaun, the gentlest horse in the stable.

At first glance, Shaun did not look gentle. He was a horse right out of the movie "Land of the Kings," tall and proud, twice the size of my frisky Baguio horse. But unless I finally clambered onto the saddle, he pounded no assurance calmed me.

My nervousness abated as we rode up and down small hills, through meadows carpeted with wildflowers, and finished a pasture laced by cows and sheep. The views certainly were better than those of a paddock! I started to enjoy myself, and frequently patted Shaun's silky coat and lush mane. Afterwards, I was jubilant. Nothing beats overcoming a phobia.

My son had a huge grin during his entire ride, and even though he looked small on his horse, he never had a moment of fear. His first horseback ride was perfect. It would definitely not be his last.

For Tree Adventures, go to www.treeadventures.co.nz. For Segway Magic Broomstick Tours, go to www.segwaynz.co.nz/tours.html. For Hoddan Valley Stations Horse Trekking, go to www.paradise.net.nz.

E-mail the author at bluebook@philstar.com.

CENTURY-OLD

Assumption College Baliu celebrates its 100th year this year. As a tribute to Dr. Maria Esperie...Assumption High School Class '77, together with Manuel Baliu, organized the exhibit "Art of Clay" as a fund-raising project for the Centennial landmark of the Assumption Baliu Centennial Sports Complex. The opening of the exhibit was attended by Assumption Baliu HS Class '77, pottery enthusiasts, alumnae from University of San Agustin and Angeleno College and other guests.

How the schools caught . . .

From page 1

week, including a quiz bee, over at Pedro E. Stevens Elementary School in Olongapo City.

Cristy B. Tiongzon compared her students at St. Alphonsus Liguori College-Iriga Inc. in Buenos, Cavite, with an activity called "Getting to Know Ou Ingredient" before introducing them to Joel and friends. She also put up a tournament in the classroom. She reported that her students had fun setting all sizes of clear straws into loops.

At Hinaghitanan Elementary School in Bo City of San Juan, Magdalena S. Ferrer's class turned Joel's story into a play and presented it complete with costumes and a rap showing a park background.

Copies of the newspaper could not be delivered to Marikina Elementary School because of transfers flooding, as Linda de Leon said her 344 third grade students missed two chapters of "Joel." The same thing happened to the big-size supply of Nancy Anne B. Dela Paz to her 304 fourth grade students at Fairview Elementary School had to play catch-up with the story after back copies were delivered.

Thankfully, the strong tropical storms did not do much damage in Mandaluyong and did not hamper learning for teacher Ana A. Jimeno's 50 children at students at Julia de Jesus Basco, as well as Rhinda Torres' words at Bautista Elementary School.

Marilyn B. Gonio said her students missed the serialized story as she used last year's story ("Pinoy Henyo: Learn-A-Lesson") which she had digitized and saved. She said she shared the stories with their community reading program.

See local issues checklist.

The creative output by the students were outstanding and astounding. From the characters made and bag mobiles to the thank you letters that they made for Boo Chan and Joel Boo.

The stories was provided to newspapers globally by the World Association of Newspapers-Info to mark World Literacy Day.

Bench has submitted the two newspaper copies for another schools for all three stories in the EE Initial Reading Program.

Early in 2009, we published Elida Cardoso Fernandez "The Magic Circle" in six installments for high school students.

In 2008, we ran "Frances Learns a Lesson," another WAN-supplied series.

Reader feels nostalgic for good old days

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL article in the Learning section ("Smaller than a 5th grader, but are they smaller than us all?" Antonio Quina, Jr., Nov. 11, 2009)!

Imagine the lively and giving us lessons on "environment on the and the source of life."

"Re-road management proposal should be posted at the offices of the Metro Manila Development Authority and the Department of Public Works and Highways. I have been asking for something like this for Capital Ally Drive in Diliman (Quezon City)—pedestrian and bicycle lanes so people would walk more instead of taking bicycles, for short trips.

The action made me nostalgic for Sampaloc Avenue (now Tomas Morato) that was lined with huge tamarind trees and Taft Avenue, with beautiful acacias. As a child, I walked to Dangco across the Puente Colgante, playing with the elephant. Jumbo at the "forest park" behind the Metropolitan Theater along the way. On the return trip, I bought treats at the Plaza Lawton flower market.

Surely, with political will and people's cooperation, can we not have roads, avenues and highways according to Tony's song petition?

Consuelo E. Sison, III

Continuing legal education seminar

THE CENTER FOR GLOBAL Free Practices (CGBP), with the background of the bar of Philippines (IBP) Manila Chapter 3, is holding the 2010 MCLE Program Feb. 5, 6, 12 and 13 at the InterContinental Hotel in Makati City.

The four-day program offers 36 credit units of Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) to allow participants to comply with the requirements before the April 14 deadline.

Under Bar Matter No. 850, the MCLE Committee has to require adequate proof of a lawyer's compliance with the requirements for continuing education. A lawyer will be listed as a delinquent member of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines and will not be allowed to practice until he/she has taken the required units.

Bar Matter No. 1922 requires lawyers to indicate in their pleadings their MCLE compliance number or risk dismissal of the case and removal of the pleadings from records.

The seminars bring together seasoned law lecturers. Topics will include the "Art of Direct and Cross Examination" by Sandiganbayan Justice Edilberto Sandoval; "Issues of Child Custody in Annulment Cases & Handling Psychological Incapacity Cases," Katrina Legarda; "Mastering IBP Disciplinary Procedures," Alicia Risos-Vidal; "How SC Disposes Cases"; Implementing Rules on Arbitration," Custodio Pobadora; "Writing the Winning Motion for Decision," Judge Philip A. Aguinaldo; "Can Extradition Be Avoided?," Jose A. Bautista; "How to Collect Money Claims for Attorneys," Eduardo Siman; "Special Penal Laws," Feural Sayson; "Dealing as Lawyers: A Plaintiff's View," Ferdinan D. Rabilas.

"Handling Pitfalls in Legal Writing," Jose Abalos; "Handling Evidentiary Objections in Election Trial," Ferdinand T. Rabanan, legal director of the Commission on Elections; "New Methods for the Chief Legal Counsel of Banking Corporations," Development Bank of the Philippines chief legal counsel Bernilda Tejada; "Best Practices in Cyber Intellectual Properties," Atty. Emmanuel Bautista, director of Investigation information technology forensic expert Palmer Mallari; "Winning Methods in Labor Arbitration," Ernesto de Guzman; "Special Problems in Constitutional Law," Rodolfo Sinang; and "How to Hold Lawyers Liable for Civil Damages," Justice Amy Javier.

Pre-registration is required. Fee is P11,750, inclusive of snacks and lunch, for those availing of the early bird and group discounts (IBP Manila Chapter members get an additional 10 percent discount. Visit www.ibp.org. Call 8427340 or 09-and 8506861 or 09 or e-mail ibp@ibp.org.

OLDEST REPUBLIC IN THE WORLD

To mark San Marino day, the consular office of San Marino held a cultural awareness program for Grade V students and officers of Bonifacio Elementary school in Makati City. San Marino honorary Consul General and PJ Lhuillier Inc. president/CEO Jose Mari Lhuillier briefed students on the culture of the European country, the world's oldest republic.

Partner school: Isaac Lopez Integrated School (Mandaluyong City)
No. of students supplied with kapatas: 212 in Grade 1
Teachers: Ronnie Fabreag, Rina C. Gonzales
Principal: Juanita P. Yulo

Partner school: New Cabalan Elementary School (Olongapo City)
No. of students supplied with kapatas: 155 in Grade 4
Teacher: Delia V. Sahagun
Principal: Conso G. Cajindos Jr.

Partner school: Pinaglabanan Elementary School
No. of students supplied with kapatas: 46 in Grade 1
Teacher: Magdalena S. Rocuyo
Principal: Lydia C. Abesa

Partner school: Batanga Integrated School (Batanga, Bataan)
No. of students supplied with kapatas: 33 in Grade 1
Teacher: Mailyn B. Cerio
Principal: Merlinda T. Tablan

PARTNER school: St. Alphonsus Liguori Integrated School (Bacoor, Cavite)
No. of students supplied with kapatas: 34 in Grade 1
Teacher: Cristina B. Incognito
Principal: Cecilia E. Ilan

Partner school: Kostka School of Quezon City
No. of students supplied with kapatas: 55 in Grade 1
Teacher: Jose T. Fernandez
Principal: Anita L. Alfonsus

Partner school: Sto. Domingo Elementary School (Nicolas, Pampanga)
No. of students supplied with kapatas: 83 in Grade 1, 128 in Grade 4
Teachers: Emmanuel S. Cunha, Diana Jeanla Pineda, Rosa C. Bautista
Principal: Fernando M. Bonan

Partner school: Bonifacio Elementary School (Baguio City)
No. of students supplied with kapatas: 138 in Grade 4
Teachers: Marcela B. Olaya, Rose Mercado-Bonoan, Frida Bisnar
Principal: Leonard Dawatan
New principal: Lourdes B. Lomas

The family that folds together, wins together

THE BARRERA FAMILY—DAD Roberto, Hannah, 8, mom Vicky Joshua, 10, and Rain, 6—show off their Hello Kitty prizes from Bando Loot for their origami entry "Mary, the Caterpillar," which won the top prize in our Paper Bag Contest. The Barreras also won an overnight stay with breakfast at Sofitel Plaza Hotel Manila. Left photo shows the family working on one of their three origami stories. "It was a real challenge to use newspaper because it was too soft," said Roberto, "and to make the pieces carry the colors of the characters in the story."